Ramananda Lectures delivered at the University of Calcutta

THE NEWSPAPER IN INDIA

BY

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" Give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will.
through and through,
Cleanse the foul body of the
infected world,
If they will patiently receive
my medicine."

—SHAKESPEARE

DEDICATED

TO

THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR DEPARTED FRIENDS IN JOURNALISM

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK
KASTURIRANGA IYENGAR
AUROBINDO GHOSE
UPADHYAYA BRAHMABANDHAB
SYAMSUNDER CHAKRAVARTY
BIPIN CHANDRA PAL
RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

Who upheld the best traditions of the profession.

INTRODUCTION

I was invited by my *alma mater* the University of Calcutta to deliver a series of lectures named after the late Ramananda Chatterjee, Editor, the *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review*. I accepted the offer and, having spent more than fifty years of my life in journalism, chose The Newspaper in India as the subject of the lectures. It is a subject which has a fascination for me. But the especial reason why I selected it was the danger with which the Press in India may be confronted. Having been a firm believer in the liberty of the Press which alone can make the country safe for democracy I would be disappointed and pained if the country becomes safe for hypocrisy. I have, therefore, sounded a tocsin of alarm in the lectures and hope it will have the desired effect on the people.

HEMENDRA PRASAD GHOSE

THE NEWSPAPER IN INDIA

I

Of the benefits derived by India from her connection with Great Britain, one of the most important and valuable is the introduction of the newspaper which has played a glorious part in developing nationalism in the country, creating a common conception of collective responsibility and making a homogeneous nation from heterogeneous hordes.

Addressing a meeting of the representatives of his countrymen in 1886, the great *savant* Rajendralala Mitra said :—

" It has been the dream of my life that the scattered units of my race may some day coalesce and come together; that instead of living merely as individuals, we may some day so combine as to be able to live as a nation."

The realisation of this dream owes more to the insistent, consistent and persistent preaching of the Press in India than to anything else, that a united people alone can succeed in securing its birth-right, that fleshly arms and the instruments of war are but a fragile tenure and " soon to nothing brought " when opposed to the interests and the will of an enlightened people, that history affords repeated proofs of the truth that—

> " Where Empires towered that were not just:
> Lo! the skulking wild fox scratches in a little heap of dust."

In India in bondage it was, so to say, the mission of the Indian section of the Press to preach the gospel of nationalism. And in doing so it braved dangers—danger being the touch-stone that tests the sincerity of

the pioneer. This mission though considered to be anathema by the foreign rulers, was not outside the ample sweep of the newspaper as understood by masters of the art of journalism who practised it as a profession and not a trade, their notion in regard to the newspaper being that "it was a responsible adviser to the public," its first duty being "to provide the news, uncoloured by any motive, private or public; its second, to present certain views of public policy which it believed to be for the good of the . . . . community."

And what could do more good to the community than its freedom? Aurobindo has put it thus :—

"Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility."

Though the newspaper was first established in India by Europeans it bourgeoned forth magnificently in the hands of Indians; and, from the moment it did so, it began to see that the individual merged with the collective whose interests it held higher than anything else, and considered stronger than death.

Prior to the introduction of the newspaper in India the popular craving for news and views explored other avenues for satisfying itself. The crude method of securing them from the "whispering galleries of the East" had been adopted for centuries. But it had its shortcomings, especially because the transmission of news and views was almost sure to effect some changes.

On important occasions interested individuals had to employ especial agencies for transmission of news. To give an instance, when Bajee Rao, the Peshawa, lay in camp on the bank of the Narbudda, waiting anxiously for the news of the grand army he had despatched to

conquer Northern India, his scouts brought in a runner they had stopped who had undertaken to run in nine days across India from beyond Delhi to Aurungabad in the Deccan with a cipher message to some bankers from their correspondents in the north that the Mahratta army had been routed on the field of Paneeput.

This was an individual case. As for the masses—prior to the introduction of the printing press in India, the craving of the people for news and views had to be provided for by professional reciters.

The newspaper revolutionised the method of distributing news. The method changed when the art of printing was invented. Its advantages proved vast and important. "The productions of men of genius and learning, the records of literature and science, of whatever is either brilliant in imagination or profound in thought, whatever may either adorn, or improve the human mind, thenceforth became imperishable. The light of knowledge cannot again be quenched; it is free and open, and accessible as the air we breathe. The future history of the world, may, indeed, disclose enough of misery and of vice; but it cannot again present an universal blank, or be disgraced by another age of utter and cheerless ignorance."

Full advantage was taken of the art of printing by the newspapers in countries ruled by enlightened rulers. But the foreign rulers of India were reluctant to allow the people of the country whom they wanted to keep steeped in ignorance, to take advantage of this powerful instrument for the spread of knowledge.

When Captain Sydenham who represented British interests at the Hyderabad Court wishing to gratify a desire expressed by the Nizam to see some of the appliances of European science, procured for him three

specimens in the shape of an air-pump, a printing press, and the model of a man-of-war, his action staggered the British authorities. When he mentioned this in his correspondence with the Chief Secretary, he was censured for having placed in the hands of a native Prince so dangerous an instrument as the printing press. Captain Sydenham wrote back that the Government need be under no apprehensions for that the Nizam had taken so little interest in the printing press, that he had not even made a present to the compositors who had gone from Madras "to exhibit the application to practical purposes of the implements of their craft." To ensure that the placid slumber of the Government might not be disturbed by disquieting dreams of possible danger, Captain Sydenham added that if the Government still felt any uneasiness about the presence of this dangerous instrument of civilization at the Court of the Nizam, he could easily obtain admission to the Treasure House where the printing press had been kept and there so cripple it as to ensure its never being in a fit condition to do duty again.

Such was the ruling bureaucrats in India who gave out that they had come out to this country to bear the "white man's burden" and rule those whom they considered no better than "half-devil-half-child."

Even in England the art of printing was at first looked at with suspicion. The first of the race were illiterate soldiers who conquered the effete remains of Roman civilization. "They despised the conquered and everything that the conquered could do, including writing. The early Knights learned to sing and dance and wait on table, but left writing to the contemptible clerks. Rivalry between them and the church increased their antagonism towards education. When Caxton furnished a hated machine—the press—to a hated

trade, their fury became explosive. They deprived Lord Rivers of the guardianship of young Edward V for causing some verses of his own composition to be printed."

This feeling lingered long. Chief Justice Thomson of Illinois in handing down the unanimous verdict of the Court in City of Chicago *Vs*. Tribune Co., April, 1923, remarked :—

" The struggle for freedom of speech has marched hand in hand in the advance of civilization with the struggle for other great human liberties. History teaches that human liberty cannot be secured unless there is freedom to express grievances. As civilization advanced and as the means for expressing grievances multiplied, the struggle between the people and their despotic rulers became more bitter. With the opening of the seventeenth century the people began to publish newspapers, and history begins to record unspeakable prosecution of the editors."

If such was the condition in countries which call their constitution democratic what could be expected in India in bondage?

The schoolmaster, however, was abroad with his primer, pursuing a course which no power of man could arrest. And the newspaper was established in India in 1780, several years before *The Times* was started in England.

Hunter has remarked :—

" For a full century after Charnock founded Calcutta, the power of the Press was unknown in Bengal. Nor, indeed, did that power at first prove for good. The earliest Calcutta newspaper, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette* (1780), was proscribed, not unjustly, within its first ten months, after which no copy might pass through the Post Office. Its later numbers, nauseous

mixtures of dullness and indecency were written and edited in jail. During fifty years its successors uttered their feeble voices in peril of deportation and under menace of the censor's rod. Scurrility and servility, indeed, long seemed the only two notes known to Calcutta journalism."

This historian of British India had added :—

"Who could have foreseen that those cat-callings of bugle-boys, practising their prentice wind-pipes in some out-of-way angles of the ramparts, were destined to grow into clear trumpet notes which should arouse sleeping camps to great constitutional struggles and sound the charge of political parties in battle?"

The reason was not far to seek. The first newspapers in India were established by Europeans for the European residents. In the fierce struggles of the pent-up stifling Settlement, no reputation was too high, no fate too tragic, to escape the ravening tusk of slander in a society which was corrupt to the core—a society of men extremely unscrupulous and women who had no regard for decency and decorum. It was for the Anglo-Indian society that the newspapers had to cater. If it is a fact that in literature a thing becomes his at last who says it best, it is equally true that newspapers to be successful or even to maintain their existence must conform to the taste of the society they serve. The Anglo-Indian society had at its head Lord Clive who felt no conscientious scruple to forge the name of a colleague on a document which laid the foundation of British power in India, and who could escape the bitings of conscience only by committing suicide. It had at its head Warren Hastings whom that society allowed to live in open adultery with the wife of the Russian painter Imhoff, and who was angry with *Hicky's Gazette* when it published the strictly private arrangement by which

Mrs. Imhoff became the wife of the first and greatest Governor-General in India who served the British here and who did not scruple to escape exposure about monetary transactions by getting a "political murder" perpetrated in the matter of Maharaja Nanda Kumar.

" Drunkenness, gambling and profane swearing were almost universally practised. The public journals testify to the absence of ' decency and propriety of behaviour ' in social life. In December, 1780, one of them complains that ' Europeans of all ranks ' ordinarily made Christian festivities a ' plea for absolute drunkenness and obscenity of conversation, etc., that is, while they are able to articulate at all ' and urged that respectable men ought not to subject their wives to such impure and injurious associations."

The following " caution " appeared in the advertisement columns of the *Calcutta Gazette* of the 23rd February, 1797—" A certain person who made her appearance among the company among the auditory on the first night of performance, is desired to take notice that in future she will not be permitted to remain in the house, should she be so ill advised as to repeat her visit.—Theatre Wheler Place."

As an evidence of the morality of the day, we insert an advertisement of a house for sale by the auctioneers, Faria Williams and Hohler, in 1803—

" A garden house and ground, situated at Taltolah Bazar, which to any gentleman about to leave India, who may be solicitous to provide for an Hindoostanee female friend, will be found a most desirable purchase."

In a trial held in the Supreme Court of Calcutta, on the 10th June, 1807—"a school mistress was brought up on a charge of ' prostituting one of her scholars for money.' The result of the trial was the ' acquittal of the person indicted, from the indictment being erro-

neously laid; however, the Chief Justice made a most serious address to the offender stating the great infamy of her conduct, and the scandalous abuse of the character she had assumed—the mistress of a public school."

Instances need not be multiplied.

The descriptions of Madam Grand and her contemporary women remind one of the figures painted by Lely of the Court Beauties of Charles II before which we feel confronted, as Taine has put it, "by perilous and importunate courtesans with an expression, either vile or harsh, incapable of shame or of remorse."

The one thing which enthralled the attention of the English was making money—the eagerness for sudden and surreptitious gain. "On his way up to Patna in April, 1762, Hastings reported to the Governor what his own eyes had seen. To his surprise every boat he met on the river bore the Company's flag, which was flying also from many places along the bank. At almost every village he found the shops closed and the people fled, for fear of fresh exactions at the hands of the English merchants and their followers. What he saw there and afterwards convinced him that the lawless doings of his countrymen could 'bode no good to the Nawab's revenue, the quiet of the country or the honour of our nation.' It was the old tale of masterful adventurers working their mad will on neighbours too weak, timid or indolent to withstand them."

Those at the helm of affairs in England were not scrupulous about methods of making money for the Company. In the *Calendar of State Papers*, East Indies, 1513-1616, we find that to secure trading rights the English even went so far as to try to provide an English wife for the King of Sumatra in 1614. "That potentate having expressed a wish for such a consort, 'a gentleman of honourable parentage' proposed at a

Court meeting of the Company in 1614, 'his daughter of most excellent parts for music, her needle and good discourse, as also very beautiful and personable.' The probable benefit to the Company was gravely debated, 'and the lawfulness of the enterprise proved by Scripture.' But some feared that the other wives 'may poison her if she became an extraordinary favourite.' The father was willing to take the risk. . . . . ."

The bare suggestion must have seemed alarming to the Dutch.

The flippancy of Anglo-Indiàn journalists developed into a tradition which took a long time to wear off :—

"In the early days of the Indian Press, Government servants freely contributed to the newspapers and became both Editors as well as Proprietors. An amusing story is told of how one of the contributors to the *Mountain Wreath*, a paper which was started at Mussoorie and died a premature death, waited to see the Lieutenant-Governor of the North West Provinces (the name given to the present United Provinces). The literary contributor, who happened to be an officer in the Army, accompanied by another officer went to pay their respect to the Lieutenant-Governor. His Honour happened to be absent at the time of the visit, but returning after some time, the grey-haired *Chaprasie* announced that there were two gentlemen waiting to see the *Bura Sahib*. 'Where are they?' enquired His Honour, vainly gazing at the middle of the room. 'Dekho Sahib' exclaimed the Mohammedan attendant, pointing to two corners of the room, in one of which was the literary contributor standing on his head, his uniform making his attitude more ridiculous; and in the other stood his brother officer in a similar position, both seemingly determined not to

be deprived of amusement while waiting for a Lieutenant-Governor !''

The average Anglo-Indian was thus described by a well-known Anglo-Indian—Sir Alfred Lyall :—

> " He did list to the voice of the Siren,
> He was caught by the clinking of gold,
> And the slow toil of Europe seemed tiring,
> And the grey of his fatherland cold."

He came out to the East because " he must haste to the gardens of Circe."

They accepted the ideal popularized by Omar Khayyam :—

> " Ah, take the Cash and let the Credit go,
> Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum !"

They built churches or had churches built for them ; but cared very little for them. " Half-a-dozen palankeens or carriages were sufficient to convey all the persons who attended St. John's Church " in Calcutta in 1790. The Marquess of Wellesley arrived in India in 1798. An anecdote is recorded that when travelling up-country " he halted for a Sunday at a civil station where he asked the Judge to read the Church Service. But he was informed there would be some difficulty, as there was not a Bible in the station. "

It was for a society consisting of such men and women—a society seething with those fat maggots and creeping parasites that breed in the warm comfort of corruption that the newspapers had to cater. That fact alone would be sufficient to explain the tone of the Press, and the temper of those in power. The members of the Anglo-Indian society were naturally afraid of exposure and intolerant of criticism especially because they were armed with arbitrary and extraordinary powers.

Englishmen were themselves not oblivious of their moral rottenness in India and in England. When in 1800 the Court of Directors of the East India Company accomplished the ruin of the prosperous ship-building industry of India by prohibiting the employment of Indian ships in the trade between England and India, one of the reasons they adduced in support of their unjust decision was as follows :—

"The native sailors of India are * * * * on their arrival here (*i.e.*, in England) led into scenes which soon divest them of the respect and awe they had entertained in India for the European character. The contemptuous reports which they disseminate on their return cannot fail to have a very unfavourable influence upon the minds of our Asiatic subjects, whose reverence for our character, which has hitherto contributed to maintain our supremacy in the East, will be gradually changed * * * and the effects of it may prove extremely detrimental * * * *."

It need hardly be said that here we have a clear case that "Conscience does make cowards of us all."

In 1768 Bolts who had proposed to set up a printing press in Calcutta was directed by the Select Committee of the Council of Fort William—"to quit Bengal and proceed to Madras on the first ship that should sail from that Presidency in order to take his passage from thence to Europe."

The heavy hands of the authorities fell on William Duane of the *Indian World* in 1794. He had made arrangements to sell his paper on January 1st, 1795. But on December 27th, 1794, he was requested by the Private Secretary of Sir John Shore, Captain Collins, to call at the Government House where he was unceremoniously arrested by the soldiers, dragged to Fort William, kept there under strict guard for three days

and then taken on board an armed Indiaman and conveyed to England where he was set free without a single word of information and explanation. His property in India, of which he received not a pice, was worth almost fifty thousand dollars.

In 1818 the turn of another journalist—Silk Buckingham came. The Rev. Dr. Marshman thus wrote of Buckingham's *Calcutta Journal* :—

"It was the ablest newspaper which had ever appeared in India and gave a higher tone and deeper interest to journalism. A knot of youngmen of the public services, of brilliant talents, headed by Mr. Henry Meredith Parker, ranged themselves round the paper and contributed by their poignant articles to its extraordinary success and popularity. The editor, * * * commented on public measures with great boldness; * *. But the great offence of the *Journal* consisted in the freedom of its remarks on some of the leading members of Government. They had been nursed in the lap of despotism and their feelings of official complacency were rudely disturbed by the sarcasms inflicted upon them. Madras, as a rule, had been unfortunate in its Governors; no fewer than six of them had been recalled —one of them unjustly, and, with the exception of three or four, the rest had been very second rate men. One of these Mr. Hugh Elliot, then filled the chair, to the regret of the public; and the *Journal* affirmed that he had obtained an extension of his term of office, which was announced to the community in a circular with a black border."

Buckingham was expelled from the country for his comments on the appointment of the senior Presbyterian Minister in Calcutta "who was a zealous partisan of Government" to the well-paid office of Clerk to the Stationery Department. He had written :—

"The Rev. Gentleman, named below, who, we perceive, by the index of that useful publication, the Annual Directory, is a Doctor of Divinity, and the Moderator of the Kirk Session and who, by the favour of higher powers, now combines the office of parson, and clerk in the same person, has, no doubt, been selected for the arduous duties of this new place from the purest of motives, and strictest possible attention to the public interest. Such a clerk, as is here required, to inspect and reject whatever articles may appear objectionable to him, should be a competent judge of the several sorts of paste-board, sealing-wax, ink-stand, sand, lead, gum, ounce, tape, and leather; and one would imagine that nothing short of a regular apprenticeship at Stationer's Hall would qualify a candidate for such a situation. All this information, however, the Rev. Gentleman, no doubt, possesses, in a more eminent degree than any other person who could be found to do the duties of such an officer, and though at first sight, such information may seem incompatible with a theological education, yet we know that the country abounds with surprising instances of that kind of genius which fits a man in a moment for any post to which he may be appointed."

He seized on the green coats worn by the Secretaries of Departments and daubed the wearers "Gangrene of the State."

Buckingham's was by no means the last case of the deportation of a journalist from India by the British who evidently considered the pen of the journalist mightier than the sword of the warrior though they were eager to build their trust "on reeking tube and iron shard" and left out of their calculations the invincible soul of man. Even on 23rd September, 1823, Arnot of the *Calcutta Journal* was ordered to leave

India while on the 10th November, 1823, his paper was suppressed for having reprinted Leicester Stanhope's pamphlet—*The Sketch of the History and Influence of the Press in British India.*

The attitude of the authorities towards the Press would be evident from the fact that in 1799, when the Marquis of Wellesley was in Madras, he wrote privately to Sir Alfred Clarke in Calcutta as follows :—

"I shall take an opportunity of transmitting rules for the conduct of the whole tribe of editors; in the meantime, if you cannot tranquillize this and other mischievous publications, be so good as to suppress the papers by force and send their persons to Europe."

This threat was almost immediately put into action and a fresh set of rules published to circumscribe the liberty of the Press.

Regarding the publication of newspapers, after a start had been made in Calcutta, Bombay followed the example. The *Bombay Herald* was started in 1789. *The Bombay Courier* was started the next year. And the name of the *Bombay Herald* was changed into the *Bombay Gazette* in 1791. While the supreme authorities in Calcutta were striving to gag the Press by measures of brutal severity, the Bombay Government acted similarly to the Editor of the *Bombay Gazette*. Mr. Farr was deported and the authorities were appeased. Mr. Stocqueler, an Anglo-Indian journalist, described the condition of the Press in Bombay about this time thus :—

"There were but two papers extant at the time and very comical things they were. The *Bombay Courier* and the *Gazette* were composed entirely of selections from English papers and occasional law reports. The pen of the editor seldom found nobler occupation than the record of a ball and supper or a laudatory notice of an

amateur performance. Once only did an editor (Mr. Farr of the *Bombay Gazette*) venture to insert an article personally offensive to the Recorder, Sir Eward West, and he paid the bitter penalty of his experience... He was deported."

The earliest papers that were started in Madras were the *Madras Courier*, the *Hircarrah*, the *Commercial Calculator*, the *Madras Advertiser*, and the *Madras Gazette*. In 1817, the Editor and Proprietor of the *Circulator* complained to the Government that a newly-established paper, the *Advertiser*, published "literary, scientific or miscellaneous articles" which it was prohibited from publishing. The *Advertiser* was at once warned. *The Madras Gazette* was "called to account" for having advertised a French Government lottery at Pondicherry; and the Chief Secretary to the Madras Government expunged, in a proof sheet of the *Madras Courier*, a political article on the affairs of Spain!

The attitude of Government towards the Press is indicated by the opinion of Mr. Elliot, Governor of Madras, who recorded in a minute that:—

"The principal objects of those who desire the freedom of the Press are to disseminate the worst political doctrines of the times, to bring the constitutional authorities in Europe and Asia into contempt and to provide profits for the lawyers from prosecutions of libels in Courts of Justice."

In Cawnpore the first printing press was set up in 1822, publishing the *Cawnpore Advertiser*.

The Government of the time regarded the newspapers with suspicion and were ever ready to strike stunning blows on them on flimsy grounds. The conductors of the Press, on the other hand, were on the alert and eager to avoid those blows. These conductors

of the Press in India were Anglo-Indians, *i.e.*, Europeans in India, who could be deported out of the country at the sweet will of the authorities. These Anglo-Indians were trained in the traditions of the Europeans in India which were not edifying and certainly not elevating but were sordid and sullied with shameful transactions.

In the meantime the British had been extending the bounds of their possessions in India and consolidating these with a strict eye to their idea of imperialism, *i.e.*, administration-cum-exploitation of the people of the country.

The devastating Bengal famine of 1770 had been a disaster to the people carrying away a large number of the inhabitants and helping the foreigner to extinguish the prosperous industries of the country which had never been purely agricultural—depending on the caprice of the clouds.

What was India's loss was England's gain. Dean W. R. Inge in his *Outspoken Essays* has said :—

" The industrial revolution came upon us (*i.e.*, the British) suddenly; it changed the whole face of the country and the character of the people. . . . The first impetus was given by the plunder of Bengal which, after the victories of Clive, flowed into the country in a broad stream for about thirty years. This ill-gotten wealth played the same part in stimulating England's industries as the ' five milliards' extracted from France did for Germany after 1870."

The lasting benefit to England thus would be apparent from the following remarks made by Lord Rothermere in 1930 :—

" At least 4 shillings in the pound of the income of every man and woman in Britain is drawn, directly or indirectly, from the connection which England has with India."

This dangerous drain was thus measured by Martin in 1838 :—

"This annual drain of £3,000,000 on British India, has amounted in 30 years, at 12 per cent. (the usual Indian rate) compound interest, to the enormous sum of £923,997,971 sterling; or at so low a rate as £2,00,000 for 50 years, to £8,400,000,000 sterling."

These facts made Mahadeo Govind Ranade (Poona) remark—"The political domination of one country by another attracts far more attention than the more formidable though unfelt domination which the capital enterprise and skill of one country exercise over the trade and manufacture of another. This latter domination has an insidious influence which paralyzes the springs of all the varied activities which together make up the life of a nation."

The British continued their economic domination in India. India was bled white.

At the same time the political domination demoralised the people. "The Englishman," said Warren Hastings, "is quite a different character in India; the name of an Englishman is both his protection and a sanction for offences which he would not dare to commit at home."

Racial discrimination polluted the temple of justice. And the feeling was wide-spread that in cases where Europeans and Indians were concerned law courts did not deal out even-handed justice.

This was the policy of the British in India—a policy which they made every effort to maintain and which no newspaper purporting to be the organ of Anglo-India would protest against.

But even the trodden worm turns to bite. Symptoms of India's determination to vindicate its manhood and regain its self-respect were manifesting themselves;

Educated Indians not only made the Anglo-Indian journals cultivate sobriety, serious thinking and a sense of responsibility, but set an example before them which, some of them at least, were not slow to profit by.

Indians had passed through years of misrule and misery which, however, had not been able to obliterate their faith in democracy which must be broad-based on the belief that—" a Government against which a claim of liberty is tantamount to high treason, is a Government to which submission is equivalent to slavery."

History records instance of Indians having shown by practice more than by principle, what Abraham Lincoln said in America :—

" The country, with all its institutions, belongs to the people, who inhabit it. Whenever they shall get weary of the existing Government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

That democracy had taken root in the faith of the people is evident from the fact that Buddha himself was a great admirer of the republican form of Government. " Have you heard," he asked Ananda, " that Vijjians hold full and frequent public assemblies?"—and upon Ananda saying that this was so, he added, " So long, Ananda, as the Vijjians hold these full and frequent public assemblies, so long may they be expected not to decline but to prosper."

The word *Sangha* serves as a key to much that is of extraordinary interest in the ancient polity of Vedic India.

India had been the birth-place of democracy, and its people had, in their unique village organisations, kept the lamp of democracy burning during the riotous nights of foreign invasions—the tempests of conquest

and the tidal waves of nations which had swept across the country. The objects of the Muslim were sack, sacrilege and slavery and that of the European conquest, commerce and conversion. But as Hunter put it—" Hinduism was for a time submerged, but never drowned, by the tide of Muhammedan conquest." And as we find today the soul of India could not be conquered by Europeans. India had risen again; for she has a mission to fulfil. And that is why when brutal force triumphed she calmly and patiently awaited its force being spent up. That was the process which was described by Mathew Arnold thus :—

> " The East bowed low before the blast
> In patient deep disdain;
> She let legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again."

That was a process not of disintregation and downfall but of recreation and resurgence.

II

The attitude of Englishmen in the earlier days of their supremacy in India has been thus described by one of them :—

" It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest possible state of barbarism and darkness, and every attempt to diffuse the light of knowledge among the people either of our own or the Independent States, was vehemently opposed and resented."

They objected not merely to English newspapers, but also to enlightenment in any form. And even when they adumbrated a scheme of education for Indians it was, as Hunter has put it, to create a " vast clerkly class " to serve them.

But things had been moving rapidly and unexpectedly in India as soon as the chaos and confusion concomitant of the disruptive tendencies of decaying dynasties of rulers had yielded place to comparative calm. And

> " —While the tired waves, vainly breaking
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,
> Far back, through creeks and inlets making
> Comes silent, flooding in the main.
>
> And not by eastern windows only
> When daylight comes, comes in the light,
> In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
> But westward look, the land is bright."

The schoolmaster was busy with his primer, pursuing a course which no power of man could arrest. The light that was manifesting itself in India was des-

tined to attain meridian strength and splendour, and to " shine more and more unto the perfect day."

Britishers, like Rickards, saw the indications of the progress and sounded a tocsin of alarm for their countrymen. Rickards said :—

" Through the medium of schools, literary meetings, and printed books, all the learning and the science of Europe will be greedily imbibed and securely domiciled, by the Hindoos of India."

The reason why Rickards singled out the Hindus is not far to seek. The promotion of English education was more marked among the Hindus than among the Mohammedans. This was thus explained by Sir John Strachey in 1903 :—

" In many parts of India, Mohammedans, especially those of the upper classes, have always been disinclined to accept the education offered in our schools and colleges and frequent complaint has been made that they are consequently unable to compete on equal terms with Hindus for employment under Government. Feelings of religious intolerance sometimes tend to make the Mohammedans refuse to admit the necessity of Western Knowledge. . . . . . "

The Education Commission mentioned causes other than the social and historical condition of the Mohammedan community in the matter. We find the following remarks in the Report of the Commission :—

" The years which the young Hindu gives to English and Mathematics in a public school, the young Muhammadan devotes in a *madrasa* to Arabic and the law and theology of Islam."

It took a long time to change this situation and for the Moslems in India to realise that " new occasions teach new duties " and adjust religious precepts and prejudices to modern needs and conveniences, to square

those precepts and prejudices with the claims of present conditions.

The first school to impart English education in Calcutta was formally opened on January 20, 1817, after elaborate discussions extending since 14th May, 1814. The letter which Ram Mohun Roy addressed to Lord Amherst in 1813, advocating the introduction of English education, is well-known. It suggested the employment of " European gentlemen of talents and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, and other useful sciences which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world."

On the 25th February, 1824, the foundation-stone of the Hindu College building was laid " amidst the acclamations of all ranks of the native population " of Calcutta.

Some Bengalis who had been students of the Hindu College started newspapers to popularise their views. Prominent among them were Kasi Prasad Ghose who started the *Hindu Intelligencer*—a weekly journal, in 1846, and discontinued it in 1857 on the passing of the " Gagging Act "; Ram Gopal Ghose who like Russick Krishna Mullick edited the *Gyananeshan* and helped other newspapers; Krishna Mohun Banerjee who published the *Enquirer*; Peary Chand Mitter who edited the *Bengali Spectator*; Prasanna Kumar Tagore who edited the *Reformer*; and Kishori Chand Mitter who edited the *Indian Field*, when its editor Hume retired in the year 1859. The pages of these may be regarded as a historical record of the progress of Hindus in their knowledge of English.

The educated Indians not only realised the value of newspapers, but, what is more, sought and fought

for a free Press. When Adam, immediately after the deportation of Silk Buckingham, prepared—" A Rule, Ordinance and Regulation, for the Good Order and Civil Government of the Settlement of Fort William in Bengal, made and framed by the Honourable Governor-General in Council of and for the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal . . . . " forging new fetters in the furnace of arbitrary power for the Press, the move was resented by Bengalis. The Rule was laid before the Supreme Court of Calcutta by the Standing Counsel of the East India Company to be registered when it was publicly read. On the 17th March, petition was made objecting to the obnoxious rule by :—

Chandra Coomer Tagore,
Dwarka Nauth Tagore,
Ram Mohun Roy,
Hur Chander Ghose,
Gowree Churn Bonnerjee,
Prosunnu Coomer Tagore.

In the petition the signatories stated that the Rules would preclude Indians " from making the Government readily acquainted with the errors and injustice that may be committed by its Executive Officers in the various parts of their extensive country, and it will also prevent the natives from communicating frankly and honestly to their Gracious Sovereign in England and his Council, the real conditions of His Majesty's subjects in this distant part of his dominions, and the treatment they experience from the local Government."

Sir Francis MacNaughten, the Judge, who heard this appeal rejected it " merely interpreting the policy of the Government in Bengal and the Court of Directors."

Bent on exploring every constitutional avenue of redress Ram Mohun addressed an " Appeal to the King in Council against the Press Regulations." The Privy Council rejected the Appeal.

The eagerness of the educated Bengalis to start newspapers would be evident from the following significant facts :—

(1) On April 11, 1823, Bhobany Churn Bonerjee applied for a license to print a weekly paper in Bengalee entitled *Summachar Chundrika*.

(2) On April 18, 1823, an application was made by Govind Chunder Coaur and Annundo Gopal Mookerjee to publish a Bengalee newspaper, called the *Sungbad Cowmuddy*—the organ of Ram Mohun Roy.

(3) Hurree Hur Dutt applied for a license to carry on his Persian and Hindoostance newspaper, the *Jami Jehan Nooma*. The name of the Printer was William Hopkins Pearce and that of the Editor—Lalla Sooke, a Moonshee.

(4) On May 6, 1823, Moothur Mohan Mitter, Publisher, and Munneeram Thacoor, Printer, applied for a license to publish a Persian and Hindustani Newspaper called the *Shumasul Akbar* at Calcutta.

The importance of Indian-language newspapers was recognised by the Serampore Missionaries. Their organ, the *Friend of India* (Quarterly Series No. VII, December, 1822) observed :—

" How necessary a step this (the establishment of a Native Press) was for the amelioration of the conditions of the Natives, no person can be ignorant who has traced the effects of the Press in other countries. The Natives themselves soon availed themselves of this privilege; no less than four Weekly Newspapers in the Native language have now been established, and there

are hopes, that these efforts will contribute essentially to arouse the Native mind from its long lethargy of death; and while it excites them to inquire into what is going forward in a world, of which Asia forms so important a portion, urge them to ascertain their own situation respecting that eternal world, which really communicates all the vigour and interest now so visible in Europeans. *Nor has this liberty been abused by them in the least degree*: yet these vehicles of intelligence have begun to be called for, from the very extremities of British India and the talents of the Natives themselves, have not unfrequently been exerted in the production of Essays, that would have done credit to our own countrymen."

Though the first English newspaper in India and the first Indian-language newspaper were published in Bengal, the other provinces soon followed suit. Bombay had its first English newspaper in 1789. The earliest papers that were published in Madras appear to be the *Commercial Calculator*, the *Madras Advertiser*, the *Madras Gazette*, and the *Madras Courier*. (1785 A.D.)

All these newspapers were suspect with the authorities, and their editors had to discharge their duties at considerable risk—the best among the authorities looking upon newspapers as "necessary evils."

That Indian editors of newspapers worked with a full sense of their responsibility would be apparent from the prospectus of his paper the *Miratool Akbar* in which Ram Mohun in describing his editorial duties said:

"My only object is that I may lay before the public such articles of intelligence as may increase their experience, and tend to their social improvement; and that to that extent of my abilities I may indicate to the Rulers a knowledge of the real situation of their subjects and make the subjects acquainted with the established laws

and customs of their rulers : that the rulers may the more readily find an opportunity of granting relief to the people ; and the people may be put in possession of the means of obtaining protection and redress from their rulers.''

But the British rulers of the country—fully aware of their own shortcomings, the inequities of their measures and the overwhelming pressure of their system of administration—regarded the newspapers with suspicion and sought every opportunity to curtail the liberty of the Press. They scrutinised the comments of the Press not for the purpose of purging the administration of its inequities but with the object of stifling public opinion.

We would give an instance to prove our assertion. As late as 1877 Digby examined a batch of papers covering a consecutive period of a few weeks to note the tendencies they evinced and the characteristics they displayed. He noted that one of the prevalent ideas was that "to which repeated currency was given by the expression of it in the House of Commons by Mr. Bright, and its endorsement by the Marquis of Salisbury at Cooper's Hill College, just before the Prince of Wales visited India, and by certain untoward circumstances since, *viz.*, that Europeans ill-treated and are discourteous to the natives.''

The following particulars occurred in the (Bengalee) papers of the same date :—

(1) *The Barehanagar Patrika Samachar* is exceedingly grieved to hear that Inspector Buckley, of the Barrackpore Station, while in a state of intoxication, entered the shop of an old man named Khetra Nath Ghose of Rajabundipore and dealt him a blow which knocked the old man down. On his rising and attempting to escape he was again knocked down. By this a number

gathered on the spot and the Inspector turned upon them. Acts of oppression like this have become as it were an ornament of the police.

"Inspector Smith of the Dum-Dum Station tore off the beard of a carter for refusing him the use of a cart which had been already bespoken by another party. The authorities ought to take notice of his conduct."

(2) " A Correspondent of the *Bishwa Dut*, writing from Berhampore without date, states that whilst the judge, the clergyman, a silk manufacturer and Colonel (name illegible) were engaged in playing at cricket in the field facing the barracks, Babu Bankim Chatterjee, the Deputy Magistrate, happened to be passing in his palanquin along a by-path across the same; whereupon the Colonel, speaking in the Hindi language, prevented the bearers from proceeding: this led Bankim Babu to remonstrate saying that as he was in the habit of passing by that way every day he would do so on this occasion also; but on the Colonel further using threats, the Babu cited the Judge as a witness to this proceeding and on his going to do the same to the clergyman, the Colonel in a loud voice said, 'Go hence' and suiting the action to the words, laid hold of his hand and pushed him away. On a charge being brought against the Colonel, and the facts proved by evidence and the Judge finding himself in a dilemma, and being cited as a witness by the Colonel, he wrote to the Babu, saying that the Colonel wished to be forgiven, as no one at the time knew him to be Bankim Babu; but the latter insisted upon an apology being given as publicly as the insult was offered, which was at last done by the Colonel; and so the matter dropped. Be that as it may, the Bengalis have for a long time been subjected to insults; what wonder is it, then, that they should be exempt in the estimation of the mofussil authorities."

These extracts were quoted by Digby (*Calcutta Review*, 1877) from a "Report on Native Papers" published weekly in Bengal, translations of the contents being made by a Government Translator. These Reports were formerly sent to the Editors of English papers and subsequently were treated as confidential.

The Indian papers always used to expose the faults of officials and others. Sir Henry Cotton in his *Indian and Home Memories* wrote as follows :—

"A case occurred in which there was a dispute between the ryots of the large village of Joyrampore and the neighbouring (indigo) factory of Lokenathpore, of which Mr. Glascott was the manager . . . The fact remains that I decided this dispute in favour of the factory, and that when the case came before Government, as it did on a petition from the villagers, I was censured for partiality, and I remember that the Indian newspapers of the time—the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, then published as a biglot in Jessore, and the *Hindoo Patriot*, then an English weekly in Calcutta—got hold of the Government letter and rubbed in the P's and Q's with characteristic emphasis."

That such partial treatment continued, inspite of the comments of the Press, would go to show that the authorities failed to profit by them. As a matter of fact in keeping a watch on the Press—especially the Indian-language papers—the authorities behaved like the one-eyed doe of Aesop's Fables—trying to find fault with the Press and unable to profit by its remarks.

This was palpable during the Sepoy Rising of 1857. Had the authorities tried to read the writing on the wall many of the tragedies which characterised the rising could have been avoided. In the concluding portion of the elaborate address of the Judge-Advocate-General to

the Court trying Bahadur Shah, titular King of Delhi (1858 A.D.) we read :—

"If we now take a retrospective view of the various circumstances which we have been able to elicit during our extended inquiries, we shall perceive how exclusively Mahomedan are all the prominent points that attach to it. A Mahomedan priest, with pretended visions, and assumed miraculous powers—a Mahomedan King his dupe and his accomplice—a Mahomedan clandestine embassy to the Mahomedan powers of Persia and Turkey resulting—Mahomedan prophecies as to the downfall of our power—Mahomedan rule as the successor of our own —the most cold-blooded murders by Mahomedan assassins—a religious war for Mahomedan ascendancy—a Mahomedan Press unscrupulously abetting—and Mahomedan sepoys initiating the mutiny."

The reference to the Mahomedan Press in the address is significant. The Mahomedan Press had been pouring out venom which escaped the notice of the authorities. Similarly, had the authorities taken note of the demands put forward by the advanced section of the nationalist Press—especially in Bengal and Bombay—from 1905 they could have avoided what Rickards had told his countrymen in 1832 that if they did not change their policy—"the day may not be far distant when you shall feel, in disappointment and disgrace, how feeble is physical, compared with moral power : and in the downfall of the magnificent empire of India . . . may add one more page to the proofs given by history, that fleshly arms and instruments of war, are but a fragile tenure, and 'soon to nothing brought' when opposed to the interests, and the will of an enlightened people."

But intoxicated with their own physical power and their ingenuity in harnessing science to the chariot of

death and of destruction the British in India forgot the lessons of America and the happenings of Ireland. They piled repression upon repression to asphyxiate the Press or win it over with tempting offers of bribe in some form or other.

The authorities would have done well if they had not forgotten what one of them, Sir Charles C. Stevens had said about the especial position of the Native Press :—

"The Position of the Native Press must necessarily be peculiar. It must, from the nature of things, be always in opposition. If we found a Native Paper constantly expatiating on the blessings of British rule, on the unmixed advantages of Western civilisation, and on the administrative and private virtues of English officials, we think, we should not respect the editor or his staff the more for it; we should think him a hypocrite who was playing what he considered to be a paying game. . . We must, therefore, look to Native writers for criticism of Government measures and of Government servants."

The duty which Sir Charles would see imposed on the Indian Press—whether conducted in English or in an Indian-language—the best Indian papers have diligently discharged. And they have never been chary to brave risks and suffer sacrifices for the discharge of duty. If in the earlier days the journalists in India, as Hunter has put it, "uttered their feeble voices in peril of deportation and under menace of the censor's rod," in later times—under British rule—they had to utter their clear voices in peril of prosecution, imprisonment, confiscation of security deposits, pre-censorship, confiscation of deposits and printing materials as also of temptation—subsidy in some form or other—open or secret.

But it stands to their credit that very few of them had been cowed down by threats or had succumbed to the subtle influence of temptation.

From Hurish Chunder Mukherji whom G. Paramaswaran Pillai, himself a journalist of repute—has aptly described as "the first native journalist of any note in India" to Ramananda Chatterjee, eminent journalists have braved the wrath of influential individuals or the Government while Surendra Nath Banerjea had suffered imprisonment for contempt of Court and B. G. Tilak when sentenced to "three years' transportation under each of the first two charges—the sentences to run consecutively" solemnly said :—

"There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."

It was during the pendency of another sedition case against him (1897 A.D.) that Tilak had, when asked to consider if he should escape punishment by expressing regret for what had appeared in his paper, said that the risks of punishment "we must take if we dabble in politics. They are the risks of our profession." In a memorable letter he had written :—

(1) "My position amongst the people entirely depends upon my character ; and if I am cowed down by the prosecution...........I think living in Maharashtra is as good as living in the Andamans."

(2) "Beyond a certain stage we are all servants of the people. You will be betraying and disappointing them if you show a lamentable want of courage at a critical time."

The will of the people the British hoped to trample under the iron heels of repression. They considered themselves the eagle and the people of India jays and

carrion kites! When in 1898, Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code was repealed and a new section to deal with "Sedition" substituted in its place Sir Alexander Mackenzie—then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, had the audacity and impudence to say so in the Indian Legislative Council by quoting the following lines of a poem by Macaulay :—

" Once the jays sent a message
Unto the eagle's nest:
' Now yield thee up thine eyrie
Unto the carrion kite,
Or else come valiantly and face
The jays in deadly fight.'
Forth looked in wrath the eagle,
And the carrion kite and jays
Soon as they saw his beak and claw
Fled screaming far away."

That was in 1898. But the newspapers could not be silenced. And in 1946, it was proved that the boast of the Lieutenant-Governor was merely the blinking of the owl not at the eagle but at the sun—the rising sun of freedom.

The part that Indian newspapers—conducted in English or the Indian-languages have played in India's freedom's battle is at once bold, earnest and patriotic. These papers had appeared to serve a purpose. A year after its first appearance Aurobindo wrote of the *Bande Mataram* :—

"It came into being in answer to an imperative public need and not to satisfy any private ambition or personal whim; it was born in a great and critical hour for the whole nation and has a message to deliver, which nothing on earth can prevent it from delivering........... It claims that it has given expression to the will of the

people and sketched their ideals and aspirations with the greatest amount of fidelity.''

It was so with almost every Indian newspaper.

The *Hindoo Patriot* of Hurish Chunder Mukherji upheld the cause of the indigo cultivators with such success that the European indigo planters had to yield. It made the peasants combine to demand and secure their right. Its writings brought about the first organised passive resistance in India. The editor died of over-work but successful and the feeling of the people was—in the words of Walt Whitman :—

'' The ship is anchor'd safe and sound,
Its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship
Comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread
Walk the deck, my captain lies
Fallen cold and dead.''

The *Hindoo Patriot* of Kristo Das Pal, the organ of landholders, wrote in 1874, *i.e.* ten years before the collective wisdom of the nation succeeded in founding the Indian National Congress after the controversy over the Ilbert Bill :—

''Home Rule for India ought to be our cry, and it ought to be based upon the same constitutional basis that is recognised in the Colonies.''

It was not before, 1906—that with the bitter experience of the anti-partition agitation in Bengal with the Physical Force movement as its concomitant and the boycott as its weapon that this claim was put forward from the Congress platform.

When Surendra Nath Banerjea—the father of Indian nationalism—began his political work he resus-

citated the *Bengalee* in 1878, which had been founded in 1861, and in which W. C. Bonnerjee had served his apprenticehood as a boy and had been touched by the magic wand of politics.

The *Bande Mataram* placed before the nation—eager to vindicate its manhood—the ideal "absolute autonomy free from foreign control."

The Sandhya had for its founder-editor one who, when hauled up on a charge of sedition, made the memorable statement :—

"I do not want to take any part in this trial because I do not believe that in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national development."

The remarks of B. G. Tilak have already been quoted.

Though Allahabad was the stronghold of the English bureaucracy represented by the *Pioneer*, Pandit Ajudhya Nath started in 1879, the *Indian Herald* as the organ of the natives of the country. He also patronised the *Indian Union*. In this he was followed later by Pandit Motilal Nehru who started the *Independent*. The *Leader* had been another Allahabad paper of note started by Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya with Nagendra Nath Gupta as editor. C. Y. Chintamony who succeeded Gupta made it the success it became later.

When Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia—a prince among men—took upon himself the duty of spreading education in the Punjab he started the *Tribune* and requested Surendra Nath Banerjea to choose an editor for it. Surendra Nath's choice fell upon young Sitala Kanta Chatterjee who fully justified the choice. The *Punjabee* (1905), started by Lala Lajpat Rai, represented more

advanced political views and was often in hot waters. The first editor was Jaswant Rai.

In Madras the *Hindu* was the first important Indian newspaper. It was started in 1878 (20th September). Its first editors were Messrs. G. Subramaniya Aiyar and M. Viraraghavacharya. "They were potent wheels in the machine that has made Indian Journalism the handmaiden, if not something more, of Indian Nationalism." Of them W. S. Blunt wrote in 1884, they "contrasted by no means unfavourably with men of their profession in London." Later the *Hindu* was taken over by Kasturiranga Iyangar who made it the leading newspaper of the Presidency while its founder-editor G. S. Aiyar found ample scope for his journalistic genius in the Tamil paper *Swadeshmitram*.

Bombay journalism was dominated for a very long time by papers owned and run by Europeans while the *Indu Prakash*, an Anglo-Marathi daily was the vehicle of advanced Indian political opinion. It was in the columns of the *Indu Prakash* that Aurobindo practised his prentice pen in journalism. The *Bombay Chronicle* was published on 3rd March, 1913, with P. M. Mehta as its guiding spirit and B. G. Horniman as its editor.

The *Indian Mirror* was for a long time the only Indian-conducted English daily in Calcutta and died of decay after a long career of usefulness.

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* has a long history with various instances of weathering violent squalls.

Dr. Besant's contribution to Indian journalism must be acknowledged with gratitude like that of Aurobindo, Shyam Sunder Chakrabarty of the *Servant*, Bipin Chandra Pal, C. R. Das of the *Forward* and many a *clarum et venerable nomen*.

The Indian newspapers can claim as their motto—*Nitor in adversum*—I strive against adverse circum-

stances. They have striven against opposition, aggression and repression and cemented with their sacrifice the bond of nationalism which has triumphed in India and demonstrated that freedom's battle once begun " though baffled oft. is ever won."

They can claim to have brought about the downfall of foreign domination in the country by educating public opinion and convincing the people that even good government cannot be a substitute for self-government. They have preached—like Burke—" A Government against which a claim of liberty is tantamount to high treason, is a Government to which submission is equivalent to slavery." That their preaching has been effective no one can gainsay.

The history of the Press in India has a moral to point to and a warning to provide the Government of the country. In what may be called a " lucid interval " Sri Rajagopalachari said in the Indian Parliament—" We have taken over power from the British Government in full confidence that we will be able to rule this country." The power the Government is now enjoying was a gift secured by agreement. The Government have inherited a system of government against which the people had a grievance and which they had striven to change. If the successors now insist on and persist in the old system regarding the Press with obnoxious security deposit, pernicious pre-censorship and the exploded definition of disaffection they will make a grievous mistake—the blunder of prancing proconsuls and blustering bureaucrats. And they will make the Press in India remember the words of Lowell :—

" —Better far to speak
One simple word which now and then
Shall waken their free nature in the weak
And friendless sons of men."

III

The agony of the Press in India was due to the attitude of the British authorities both in India and in England. They were intolerant of criticism—a characteristic of autocrats. "The people! The people! What have the people to do with the laws except obey them?"—That was the opinion they clung to especially as the laws were of their own making. That is exactly why Mill remarked :—

"To govern a country under responsibility to the people, and to govern one country under responsibility to the people of another, are two very different things. What makes the excellence of the first, is that freedom is preferable to despotism; but the last is despotism."

And he added :—

"The government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another, does not and cannot exist. One people may keep another as a warren or preserve for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle-farm to be worked for its own inhabitants."

The foreigner, therefore, had a horror of criticism. The policy of the Government of Bengal and the Court of Directors was rightly interpreted by Sir Francis MacNaughten, the Judge of the Supreme Court who heard the objection of six Bengalis to the Ordinance issued by Adam and his colleagues in 1823—"if we are to have a free constitution, which we have not—let a Free Press follow, not precede it."

Munro was appointed Governor of Madras in 1820. At Madras there was a rigid censorship of the Press and Munro held very strongly the opinion that the

restrictions upon the Press ought not to be removed. As the subject was exciting a good deal of attention both in England and in India, shortly after he assumed the office, he recorded his views upon it in a comprehensive Minute for the consideration of the Governor-General and the Court of Directors. The key-note of the policy he advocated is contained in one of the first sentences of the Minute, in which he stated that he " cannot view the view of a Free Press " in India " without feeling that the tenure with which we hold our power, never has been and never can be the liberties of the people." He wrote :—

" Those who speak of the Press being free in this country, have looked only at one part of the subject. They have looked no farther than to Englishmen, and the Press as a monopoly in their hands for the amusement or benefit of their countrymen. They have not looked to its freedom among the natives, to be employed by them for whatever they may also consider to be for their own benefit and for that of their own countrymen. A free Press and the dominion of strangers are things which are quite incompatible; and which cannot long exist together. For what is the first duty of a free Press? It is to deliver the country from a foreign yoke, and to sacrifice to this one great object every meaner consideration; and if we make the Press really free to the natives as well as to Europeans, it must inevitably lead to this result."

Again :—

" The advocates of a free Press seek, they say, the improvement of our system of Government, and of the minds and the conditions of the natives; but these desirable ends are, I am convinced, quite unattainable by the means they propose. There are two important points which should always be kept in view in our

administration of affairs here. The first is, that our sovereignty should be prolonged to the remotest possible period; the second is, that whenever we are obliged to resign it we should leave the natives so far improved from their connection with us as to be capable of maintaining a free, or at least a regular government, among themselves. If these objects can ever be accomplished, it can only be under a restricted Press. A free one, so far from facilitating, would render this attainment utterly impracticable; for by attempting to precipitate improvement it would frustrate all the benefits which might have been derived from a more cautious and temperate proceeding."

This desire to prolong British sovereignty in India "to the remotest possible period" had become an article of faith with the British. It made Morley say in 1906:—"For as long a time as my poor imagination can pierce through, for so long a time our Government in India must partake, and in no small degree, of the personal and absolute element." It made the British overlook Lincoln's axiom that "God never made one people good enough to govern another people."

That the British were intolerant of criticism in India would be apparent from the significant fact that criticisms by European journalists even were not tolerated or treated with consideration with a view to profiting by them.

If Munro had foreseen the day when the British would withdraw from the India of Indians capable of a regular government, it was not what *The Times* could foresee in 1886. In its editorial article on the Indian National Congress it indulged in sabre-rattling and said:

"It was by force that India was won, and it is by force that India must be governed, in whatever hands

the government of the country may be vested. If we are to withdraw, it would be in favour not of the most fluent tongue or most ready pen, but the strongest arm and the sharpest sword."

Elphinstone who was Governor of Bombay from November, 1819 to November, 1827, has been called an enlightened Governor. When consulted on the subject of the freedom of the Press in India he gave this opinion :

" If all Press be free, we shall be in a predicament such as no State has yet experienced. In other countries the use of the Press gradually extended along with the improvement of the government and the intelligence of the people, but we shall have to contend at once with the most refined theories of Europe, and with the prejudice and fanaticism of Asia, both rendered doubly formidable by the imperfect education of those to whom every appeal will be addressed. Is it possible that a foreign government, avowedly maintained by the sword, can long keep its ground to such circumstances?"

In a Minute Elphinstone wrote as follows :—

" A free Press seems to be the natural concomitant of free institutions. It is, on the other hand, from its very nature antagonistic to despotic rule, and above all, to foreign domination. As Sir Thomas Munro tersely expresses it, 'a free Press, and the dominion of strangers are things which are quite incompatible, and which cannot long exist together.' Our Government in this country can never be a popular Government in any sense of the term. It must be a despotism, tempered by wise and just laws impartially administered, tempered also by the education and feelings of its rulers, and by the responsibility to Parliament and to the British nation . . . . . No one who knows this country will be wild enough to assert that the people are fit for

representative institutions and self-government . . . . . If then a despotic form of Government is, indeed, the only one suitable to the state of the country as well as the only one possible for us, it follows that if the unrestricted liberty of the Press is incompatible with this form of Government, and with the continuance of our rule in the country, that it must be curtailed; the restrictions need not be many; but systematic abuse of the Government and misrepresentation of its facts, and all attempts to create ill-feeling between the different classes of the community, and especially between the European officers and the native soldiery, must be prevented.''

Elphinstone's views were thus explained by Bishop Heber in his *Journal* (Vol. III, p. 134) :—

" With regard to the free Press, I was curious to know the motives or apprehensions which induced Mr. Elphinstone to be so decidedly opposed to it in this country. In discussing the topic he was always open and candid, acknowledged that the dangers ascribed to a free Press in India had been exaggerated,—but spoke of the exceeding inconvenience and even danger which arose from the disunion and dissension which political discussion produced among the European officers at the different stations, the embarrassment occasioned to Government by the exposure and canvass of all their measures by the Lentuli and Gracchi of a newspaper, and his preference was of decided and vigorous, to half measures, where any restrictive measures at all were necessary. I confess that his opinion and experience are the strongest presumptions which I have yet met with in favour of the censorship.''

The red herring of " the fidelity of Indian Soldiers in danger ". was drawn across the path. Elphinstone referred to the possibility of the creation of ill-feeling

between the European officers and the native soldiery. Munro expressed the opinion that "it is not impossible that circumstances may induce them to listen to the instigations of enterprising leaders, and support them in mutiny and revolt." He was apprehensive of the effect of the Press on Indian soldiers and said that:—

"All that is necessary is that they (the Indian soldiers) should be more intelligent than they are at present, or should have acquired any knowledge of the rights of men or nations. All that is necessary is that they should have lost their present high respect for their officers and the European character; and, whenever this happens, they will rise against us, not for the sake of obtaining the liberty of their country, but of obtaining power and plunder. We are trying an experiment never yet tried in the world—maintaining a foreign dominion by means of a native army, and teaching that army, through a free Press, that they ought to expel us and deliver their country . . . . . It is only as regards the natives that the Press can be viewed with apprehension, and it is only when it comes to agitate our native army that its terrible effects will be felt."

That in this matter the authorities had a guilty conscience would be evident from the remarks of Sir John Malcolm who once "desired to prevent the continued publication in a native paper of the disputes between Government and the Supreme Court, and particularly translations into the native languages of some charges from the Bench which I thought were calculated to lower Government in the eyes of the native subjects." "The Brahmins and the others of the instructed classes of India," he feared, would direct their efforts chiefly "to corrupt our native soldiery, who are neither insensible to their own consequence, nor unobservant of the depressed scale on which they serve."

The depressed scale on which the Indian soldier was compelled to serve—mainly because of the poverty of the people in the country—was aggravated by the cost of the British soldier; and the Indian National Press had always condemned the action of a rapacious War Office in England to raid the helpless Indian Treasury. As late as 1910 Sir Valentine Chirol was constrained to say :—

" Even the increase in the pay of the native soldier, which Lord Kitchener obtained for him,, does not prevent him and his friends from drawing their own comparison between the squalor of the quarters in which he is still housed and the relatively luxurious barracks built for Tommy Atkins under Lord Kitchener's administration at the expense of the Indian tax-payer."

The difference between the pay of the *sepoy* and that of the Euopean soldier was as glaringly unreasonable as that between the pay of the Indian officers in the administrative or judicial service and that of the I.C.S. men—the *disjecta membra* of the British regime.

As for their position the words of Subedar Jai Singh of the 18th Garhwal Rifles during the 1930 riots in Peshwar were significant :—

" We have no *izzat*. When Hindusthan gets 'Swaraj ' we would be sweepers. If the city people were armed we would be ready to fire but we are not ready to kill children and beggars. The Indian Army is low paid and has no *izzat*. The Indian Army is to fight for India and not fire on the unarmed crowd."

We do not minimise the value and importance of discipline in the Army. But as an Indian reads this statement he cannot but say—like Burke—" My vigour relents—I pardon something to the spirit of liberty." For, it is fine to think that in the vague hinter-lands of most of us there was the latent passion for liberty for

which we were ready to die if the call came—the latent heroism which could work wonders.

We have quoted the arguments adduced by Britishers to support their policy regarding the Press in India. It is not difficult to strip them of the paint of policy and the colours of interested motive and leave them punily naked.

The arguments are based on the belief that "a free Press and the dominion of strangers are things which are incompatible, and which cannot long exist together." Other arguments adduced were advanced to support the continuance of foreign domination, *i.e.*, the continuance of British rule in India which was described as unfit for self-government or even for good government conducted by Indians. Though India is the birth-place of democracy and self-government and has preserved under a crust of conservatism the principles of a democratic form of self-government in her village communities and the structure of her social system, Lilly had the impudence to declare that representative government in India is "neither fair nor free" while self-government in India is "more a folly than a fraud." And when the demand for independence in India had clearly manifested itself, Morley in his notorious Arbroath speech (21st October, 1907), told his countrymen that if the English left India—they would have to hear "through the dark distances the roar and scream of confusion and carnage in India." He was afraid that in that case Englishmen would be unable to bear the sting of their own conscience! Where had these stings been when the British built their supremacy in India on the forgery perpetrated by Clive and the sins and crimes of his unscrupulous successors? They had been the type of power without the sense of responsibility—of material success without moral direction.

Of Morley all that can be said is that the light shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its pure splendour—the rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium, and reached him refracted, dulled and distracted by the thick gloom of selfish interest that had settled upon his soul.

There had been Englishmen in India who had seen that light and striven to do the right, and they were suspect with their countrymen. Metcalfe had said that "a tenure dependent on attempts to suppress the communication of public opinion could not be lasting; both because such a tenure must be rotten, and because such attempts must fail." In this opinion he was supported by Macaulay whose insular pride made him unable to appreciate the customs, institutions and achievements of nations living outside the limits of England but who rose on the wings of prophecy when on the 10th July, 1833, he said in the House of Commons:—

"It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government, that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English History."

Unfortunately the vision of a new India which then rose before Macaulay's mind's eye as rose the vision of New Jerusalem before the rapt eyes of the author of the Apocalypse, was not apparent to the majority of his countrymen immersed in their attempt to pile up wealth. Metcalfe's grant of freedom to the Press was hailed with acclamation by the people of India who testified their approbation not merely by laudatory addresses, but

also by the creation of a handsome building devoted to literary purposes, and designated the Metcalfe Hall in Calcutta—in order at once to celebrate the liberation of the Press and perpetuate the name of the liberator. But when the measure became known to the authorities in England it was condemned, and called forth a censure, which, though not accompanied by an immediate withdrawal of confidence, laid the foundation of a serious misunderstanding. The Directors of the East India Company became as luke-warm as they had formerly been zealous in supporting Metcalfe, overlooked the prior claim which he had undoubtedly established to the first vacant governorship in their gift, and when he applied for explanation, returned, through their Secretary, an answer so dry and laconic that on the very day he received it, he despatched a letter intimating his determination to retire from the service of the Company—and sailed for England on the 15th February, 1838.

The Dispatch of the Court of Directors, dated 1st February (No. 1) 1836, reveals their mentality. In the second paragraph we read :—

" This proceeding (removal of restrictions on the Press) is in all opposition to all our previous orders, to the solemn decisions both of the Supreme Court of Calcutta and His Majesty's Privy Council delivered in both cases, after full arguments on both sides of the question, to the recorded opinions of all preceding Governments of Bengal, Madras and Bombay, and more especially to the carefully considered measures of Lord William Bentinck and Sir Frederick Adam for extending the Licensing Regulations to Madras."

The concluding paragraph of the Dispatch ran thus :—

" We should, then be prepared to avail ourselves of the power entrusted to us by Act of Parliament, and

disallow your new law when passed, were we not aware that immediate repeal of such a law, however, ill-advised and uncalled for its enactment may have been, might be productive of mischievous results. We shall, therefore, wait for the deliberate advice of the Governor-General in Council after the arrival of Lord Auckland, your present Governor-General, before we communicate to you our final decision. But you are in possession of our sentiments, and we shall not be sorry to find that by returning to the former system you have rendered our interference unnecessary."

Not content with this Dispatch, the Court of Directors "found another opportunity of slighting Metcalfe when, in 1836, he was passed over for the Governorship of Madras." One of the Company's Directors frankly informed him that his freeing of the Press in India was unforgiven."

Though Metcalfe paid dearly for trying to do the right his ideals and endeavours were bearing fruit. Margarita Barns has truly said :—"Three factors were leading to a great increase in the newspaper-reading public: the emancipation of the Press, the spread of the knowledge of English, and the rapid commercial expansion."

But the spirit that pervaded the Dispatch of 1936 was continued till the last day of British rule in India and restrictions on the liberty of the Press sat like an incubus on the country. The law regarding the Press was changed on various occasions and the opinion of Indians generally ignored.

On the 2nd July, 1919, the Indian Press Association made the following statement :—

"The Press Association of India begs to invite attention to repression of the Indian Press under Press

Act, 1910, resulting in suppression of legitimate expression of Indian opinion, creating great alarm in the public mind. The Act, since its enactment, has penalized over 350 presses, 300 newspapers, demanded securities amounting to over £40,000, proscribed over 500 publications. Owing to demand of security, over 200 Presses and 130 newspapers could not be started. Since 1917, the Act has been even more rigorously administered. Leading influential Indian English journals like *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Bombay Chronicle*, *Hindu*, *Independent*, *Tribune*, *Punjabee*, and leading Vernacular papers like *Basumati*, *Swadeshmitram*, *Vijaya*, *Hindvasi*, *Bharatmitra*, have been subjected to its rigours........... Extreme and unjustifiable severity to which the journalists are subjected is painfully evidenced by arbitrary deportation of Mr. Horniman, editor, *Bombay Chronicle* and President of the Association."

When, during Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty, Ordinance after Ordinance was issued regarding the Press it reminded one of the use of the " Rusty Sword " of 1818 (Regulation III) by Lord Minto. When the Ordinance-making power was first given to the Governor-General of India (Act of 1861) Lord Ellenburgh, in the House of Lords observed :—

"It is now proposed that the Governor-General should be enabled to make an Ordinance which, for a limited period of time, should have the effect of law. This opens a question of the gravest constitutional importance. The law had been that whatever executive powers might be granted to the Governor-General, he should have no legislative powers without the consent of his (Legislative) Council. It was the *Magna Charta* of India. It had been adhered to throughout and very beneficially. I am unwilling to trust, except under peculiar circumstances of emergency, to any individual

man whatever, however much I may respect him or whatever personal confidence I might place in him; the absolute power of making a law to bind a great Empire not only without the concurrence of his (Legislative) Council, but perhaps even without having consulted them."

The Legislative Council of the Governor-General, at that time, was a very small body and yet Lord Ellenburgh was chary to allow the Governor-General the use of legislative power without the sanction of that body. But "reforms" after "reforms" had resulted in the expansion of the Council investing it with a representative character. And yet Lord Irwin promulgated Ordinances without the sanction of the Council. Thus was public sentiment and public opinion defied.

The Government had tried to penalize newspapers for doing what Mr. Justice Henderson of the Calcutta High Court characterised as "what honest journalists did every day" (*vide* judgment in the application against an order of the local Government forfeiting a sum of Rs. 5,000 out of the security deposited by the *Dainik Basumati*. July, 1938.)

Attempts had been made not only to ban the publication of views but of news also, by blundering bureaucrats who had overlooked the fact that suppression of news only helps the circulation of exaggerated rumours just as reaction rapidly triumphing above ground only helps its antagonists to spread their secret organisations under ground.

The sufferings of the Press in India under the British have been as painful as the sufferings of the Press in Ireland under the same regime. But the sufferings have not been in vain, for the Press has been the champion of truth and as Lowell has put it :—

"Truth for ever on the scaffold,
Wrong for ever on the throne—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow
Keeping watch above his own."

Truth has triumphed and will ever triumph over oppression and repression. The passion of patriotism had ever guided the Press of India and under critical conditions their anchor had held.

Like Ireland India has become free but divided. She had secured—what Aurobindo would call "a fissured and broken freedom." But with the new conditions created, new duties have developed amongst the people and new responsibilities now rest with the Press. The Press in India knows its duties and realises its responsibilities. It will discharge those duties and shoulder those responsibilities.

To those who have got power as the result of compromise with national conscience and national ideal we must say—beware lest you place obstacles in the way of the work of the Press like your predecessors.

We call our Constitution—the Constitution of India free. And we must remember what Daniel Webster has said :—

"The entire and absolute freedom of the Press is essential to the preservation of government on the basis of a free Constitution."

The British in India objected to a free Press because they did not and would not give India a free Constitution. That excuse cannot be adduced by the Ministers in free India. John Marshall Harlar, Associate Justice, United States was emphatic in his support of a free Press and a free platform. He said :—

" I cannot assent to that view, if it be meant that the legislature may impair or abridge the rights of a free Press and of free speech whenever it thinks that the public welfare required that to be done. The public welfare cannot over-ride constitutional privileges, and if the rights of free speech and a free Press are, in their essence attributes of national citizenship, as I think they are, then neither Congress nor any State........... can by legislative enactments or by judicial action, impair or abridge them."

Burke had remarked :—"I have known merchants with the sentiments and abilities of great statesmen; and I have seen persons in the rank of statesmen with the conceptions and character of pedlars."

All politicians are not statesmen and there will always remain the chance of novices in the ranks of politicians—be they landholders or medical men, schoolmasters or non-descripts, turn-coats or bullies, lawyers or traders, making mistakes. We have prepared and accepted a new Constitution based on the constitutions of some other countries—and as such likely to prove imperfect. And though we have adopted a new Constitution the laws of the land have not been changed to suit the new conditions created by that Constitution. The old laws regarding the Press have not been changed though they were laws enacted to suit despotism. Already law courts—call them Palladiums of Justice if you like—are discovering discrepancies in the law regarded in the light of the new Constitution —weak joints in the armour of the administration. And already administrators are assuming the role of their British predecessors of whom we used to say—

" Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
I see the lords of human kind pass by."

and taking shelter under enactments they themselves had condemned unreservedly. They must not forget that the power they now enjoy was largely secured for the people by the Press which knows that " there is a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue."

The administrators would do well to profit by the following remarks made by Chief Justice Thompson of Illinois in a suit instituted by the City of Chicago against the Chicago *Tribune* for alleged libel because it had criticised the fiscal administration of the city and thereby injured its credit :—

"There were few prosecutions for libel on Government in the Amerian Colonies, and no court of last resort in this country has ever held, or even suggested, that prosecutions for libel have any place in the American system of jurisprudence. The right of the Government to prosecute its accusers was founded on the theory that the King could do no wrong. He was an hereditary monarch and was not responsible to the people. When the people became sovereign, as they did when our Government was established under our Constitution and the ministers became servants of the people, the right to discuss government followed as a natural sequence."

To maintain the dignity and the purity of the administration, to keep it free from the iniquities and injustice that grow in the warm comfort of corruption, to remedy partiality and favouritism it is necessary that the Press should be free. The Press alone can remove wrongs.

" The freedom of the Press must not be hampered; freedom of speech must not be hampered. Abuse of free speech or free Press dies in a day, but its denial shackles the race. This has been said thousands of times in different ways, but always needs repeating and

never more than now "—when we are passing through times of stress and storm, in a shattering world of economics, when fear walks the earth. The guide posts of liberty must be maintained.

Regarding laws relating to the Press in India self-government demands that the slate should be wiped clean, and perfect liberty given to the Press in India to do its duty by the people and the Government if the Government would assume the actual proportions of a truly National Government.

Voltaire said to Rousseau when the latter's *Social Contract* (all copies) were ordered to be destroyed in Switzerland—" I do not agree with a word that you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." No less important is the dictum of Jefferson—" Our liberty depends on the freedom of the Press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."

It behoves the people to defend the freedom of the Press, and join hands with the Press, if and when necessary, to fight a reactionary Government which seeks to curtail that liberty—and bring about its downfall. Let people repeat what Milton had said :—

" Give me liberty to know, and to argue freely, according to conscience, above all liberty."

IV

We have quoted the remarks which in handing down the unanimous decision of the court in a case against the Chicago *Tribune* instituted by the City of Chicago claiming damages for alleged libel, Chief Justice Thompson of Illinois made about the prosecution of editors by despotic rulers.

The right of the Government to prosecute its accusers was, as Thompson explained, founded on the theory that the King could do no wrong. He was an hereditary monarch and was not responsible to the people. Hence, when the people become free, as they did in America when the people's Government was established there and the ministers became servants of the people, the right to discuss Government freely followed as a natural sequence. It is no wonder that in India in bondage persistent, insistent and consistent attempts would be made by the bureaucracy to forge fetters for the Press, gag it and try even other, *i.e.*, indirect means to silence criticism. The Indian Press under the British, however, proved impervious to these efforts. Every attempt to silence or even influence it was resented not only by the Press but also by the representatives of the people. The struggle manifested itself in the petition made by Chander Coomer Tagore, Dwarka Nauth Tagore, Ram Mohun Roy, Hur Chunder Ghose, Gowree Churn Banerjee and Prosonna Coomer Tagore on 17th March, 1823, objecting to the proposed Rule, Ordinance and Regulation for the Good Order and Civil Government of the Settlement of Fort William in Bengal promulgated by Government after they had deported editors for criticism which they considered "objectionable."

It was, so to say, an article of faith with the British bureaucracy in India and their employers in England that India could not be allowed to enjoy freedom of the Press because a free Press and foreign domination could not exist together. And as we have shown, when in 1835, Lord Metcalfe who had always advocated freedom of the Press abolished the existing restrictions on the Press in India he incurred the displeasure of the Directors of the East India Company while officials in India whose bark was worse than their bite behaved as if he had trod on the corn of their interests which they represented as the interest of the British.

Then came the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, and the then Governor-General Lord Canning was constrained to impose restrictions on the Press in the country. The country was passing through a crisis and as Justice Holmes said in the case Schenek *vs.* the United States :—

"When a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its efforts that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight, and that no court could record them as protected by any constitutional right."

But what can be endured in troubled times cannot and should not be tolerated in times of peace when restrictions on the freedom of the Press are sure to injure the progress of the people.

That is why a constant and continued fight was fought by the Press in India till the last day of British Rule in India. As the determination of the people to secure their birth-right—independence—grew, so the attempts of the bureaucracy to crush the Press increased.

Even in 1857, when Lord Canning was constrained to pass what has been called his Gagging Act, John Bruce Norton remarked :—

"Let them (Englishmen) depend upon it, that this attack upon the Press is in reality intended to screen the cowardice and incapacity of the real authors of the revolution . . . . . It is not that the crisis necessitated the measure ; but the crisis has been seized as the fittest moment for striking a long-meditated blow at the Press, and gratifying a grudge of ancient standing. Political capital has been made out of the bloodshed in the North-West."

The impatience on the part of the bureaucracy in India of criticism was growing with the growth of the desire of the people to secure independence. And they explored every avenue of repression to cripple the independence of the Press. They even started newspapers to support them. In Calcutta Keshab Chunder Sen's *Sulav Samachar* was revived by the Government as its organ while new and novel methods were adopted to penalize the existing papers.

An " Act to prevent the disclosures of official documents and information " (Act XV of 1889) received the assent of the Governor-General on 17th October, 1889. Its Statement of Objects and Reasons was as follows :—

" The object of this Bill is to re-enact for India, *mutatis mutandis*, the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, 1889 (52 and 53 Victoria, c, 52) which has recently been passed by Parliament. That statute applies (see Section 6) to all acts made offences by it when committed in any part of Her Majesty's dominions, or when committed by British Officers or subjects elsewhere, but the working in India of criminal law enacted by Parliament has not infrequently, notwithstanding provisions of 37 and 38 Victoria, c, 27, s 13, been beset with practi-

cal difficulty. Under these circumstances it seems desirable to take advantage of the saving for laws of British possessions contained in Section 5 of the Statute, and re-enact it for India with such adaptations of its language and penalties as the nomenclature of the Indian Statute Book requires."

The immediate reason for the enactment was the publication in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of a document alleged to refer to the occupation of Gilgit and the virtual annexation of Kashmir. The Bill was passed by the Legislative Council sitting in Simla without the non-official members. In his speech the Governor-General, Lord Lansdowne, remarked as follows:

"I may, perhaps, be permitted to enforce what I have said by referring to a recent case in which a particularly scandalous disclosure of official information has taken place. A Calcutta journal, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, in a recent issue, published what professed to be the text of a document described as one 'the original of which His Excellency will find in the Foreign Office' and so containing 'the real reason why the Maharaja of Kashmir has been deposed'."

The document purported to be a memorandum submitted to the then Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, by Sir H. M. Durand, the Foreign Secretary, in May, 1886. The attempts of the head of the Government to wriggle out of the ugly situation created by the publication made the *Statesman* remark :—

"The main allegations of the *Patrika* are thus practically admitted, and it seems to be only fair to say that the inaccuracies which have been found in the published version of Sir M. Durand's minute must be due rather to the circumstances under which, apparently the copy was made, than to any wilful garbling or manipulation of the document on the part of the *Patrika*,

for the purpose of misrepresenting the motives and intentions of the Government, as the Viceroy's speech would seem to imply."

This disclosure was as important as the publication on 9th July, 1878, by the *Globe* in England of the text of the hidden Cypress Convention which came as a thunderclap on the British Embassy in Berlin confronting the two British plenipotentiaries—Disraeli and Salisbury, with the inexplainable fact that they had perpetrated a gross breach of faith on their European colleagues and stood convicted of nothing less than a direct and recorded lie.

Prior to this that theatrical personality Lord Lytton had enacted what is known as Act IX of 1878, on 14th March, putting the Government's seal of sanction on invidious distinction between the Indian-language newspapers and those conducted in English. This obnoxous Act was repealed by Lord Ripon on 19th January, 1882.

Officialdom had been smarting under what they considered to be a grievance and wanted to arm themselves with fresh powers. In 1898, by Act IV of that year Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code was repealed and a new section to deal with "Sedition" substituted in its place. An additional section (Section 153A) was inserted in the Code, to punish "promoting enmity between classes" while a new section was substituted for the purpose of punishing "statements conducing to public mischief."

The Select Committee appointed to consider the Bill to amend the Penal Code (1898) consisted of:—

Mr. M. D. Chalmers
Mr. C. M. Rivaz
Mr. C. C. Stevens

Mr. H. E. M. James
Rao Bahadur Ananda Charlu
Sir Griffith H. P. Evans
Maharaja Bahadur Lakshmiswar Singh.

The Indian members of the Select Committee signed the report subject to their notes of dissent while some Indian Members of the Council—Mr. Chitnavis, Rao Bahadur Ananda Charlu, Pandit Bishambar Nath and Mr. Sayani put forward their objections to the Bill. But the opinion of the Indian Members counted as dust in the balance in which the British bureaucracy weighed their action.

Stevens, however, was the official who had realised the especial position of the Indian section of the Press and remarked :—

"The position of the Native Press must necessarily be peculiar. It must, from the nature of things, be always in opposition."

The first attempt to prosecute a newspaper on a charge of sedition was the case instituted against the *Bangabasi* (Calcutta) in 1891, when the Officiating Standing Counsel applied for warrants against the Proprietor, the Editor, the Manager and the Printer and Publisher of the paper under Sections 124A and 500 of the Indian Penal Code. The Jury brought in a divided verdict and the Chief Justice ordered the case to remain as *remanet* at the next Session Court Board. In the meantime the accused were prevailed upon to tender an apology and the case was withdrawn. The interpretation put upon Section 124A by the High Court was eminently satisfactory to the Government.

The next case of its kind was the first case fought out. It was that instituted against Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1897, resulting in Tilak being sentenced to 18

months' rigorous imprisonment. Tilak was asked by the editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* if he would consider the proposal made by some persons who were *personæ grata* with officials that he would express regret and Government would drop the case. To this suggestion Tilak gave a characteristic reply—

"The other side expects me to do what amounts to pleading guilty. I am not prepared to do so. My position amongst my people entirely depends upon my character, and if I am cowed down by the prosecution ....I think, living in Maharastra is as good as living in the Andamans.............Beyond a certain stage we are all servants of the people. You will be betraying and disappointing them if you show a lamentable want of courage at a critical time."

It was in this case that the trying Judge directed the jury that *disaffection is want of affection*.

Though the result of the Tilak case of 1908, amply demonstrated that the arm of the existing law was long enough to reach and strong enough to punish journalists considered by the Government to have transgressed the bounds of what the judge considered to be legitimate criticism, the Government passed in that year Act VII of 1908, empowering them to forfeit Printing Presses in certain cases.

Not content with ample powers thus made ampler the Government of Lord Minto passed in 1910, another Act to curb the power of the Press. The Bill was strongly opposed by Pandit Madan Mohun Malaviya and Bhupendra Nath Basu. Bhupendra Nath quoted Lord Morley—"Supposing you abolish freedom of the Press or suspend it, that will not end the business. You will have to shut up schools and colleges, for what would be the use of suppressing newspapers if you do not shut the schools and colleges? Nor will that be all.

You will have to stop the printing of unlicensed books. The possession of a copy of Milton or Burke or Macaulay or of Bright's speeches and all the flashing array of writers and orators who are the glory of our grand, our noble English tongue, the possession of one of these books will on this peculiar and puerile notion of Government to be like the possession of a bomb, and we shall have to direct the passing of an Explosive Books Act."

Lord Morley revealed the significant fact that a proposal had actually been made "to pass a general Press law to be put in force exclusively on the initiative of the military authorities" and said it was "as stiff a dose as ever was proffered to a British Minister within a hundred years." But Lord Minto's Government did not hesitate to pass a Press Law in 1910, riding rough-shod over the opinion of Indians like Madan Mohun Malaviya and Bhupendra Nath Basu.

The disastrous effect of this Act would be apparent from the summary of a cable sent to England by the Secretary, Indian Press Association on the 2nd July, 1919. The Association pointed out that the enactment penalized over 350 Presses and 300 newspapers, demanded securities amounting to over £40,000, and proscribed over 500 publications. Owing to demand of security over 200 Presses and 130 newspapers could not be started.

In 1921 (22nd February), Sir William Vincent, Home Member, Government of India admitted in the Assembly that the Government were quite alive to the criticisms of the Act; but owing to the exigencies of the war did not make any alteration in it, and said so to the deputation which waited upon the Viceroy. He admitted that the Government had consulted Local Governments as to the possibility of amending the Act

and when their opinions were received "owing to the dangerous situation created at the time by the war we thought it was inopportune to take action, nor indeed, with the preoccupations which filled our time at the moment, was it possible for us to do so." Later, however, he received what he called an informal deputation and discussed the question with them. This deputation was arranged at Sir William's request by K. C. Roy of the Associated Press, and among its members were Surendra Nath Banerjea, K. C. Roy, Prithwis Chandra Roy, Usha Nath Sen and myself. As a result of the discussion a Committee was appointed to examine the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, and the Indian Press Act, 1910 and report what modifications were required in the existing law. The Act of 1910 was repealed in 1922.

But as the prohibition against the use of the Dum-Dum Bullet could not make the use of fire-arms obsolete, but on the other hand made "civilised" nations harness science to the chariot of death and of destruction by the preparation and use of the atom bomb, so the repeal of the Act of 1910 in 1922, did not put an end to the persecution of the Press in India. After rejecting the weapon forged in its furnace the bureaucracy had recourse to another weapon reminiscent of their use of the "rusty sword" of 1818 (Regulation III) by Lord Minto's Government. Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code was changed to suit the purpose of the British bureaucracy, while to add a new terror officers of Government were encouraged, often directly, to prosecute newspapers for comments on their actions and were helped liberally with the ample resources of the Government.

It would take too long to recount all cases of this nature referred to under defamation. We would content

ourselves with giving a few prominent and typical cases—

(1) In 1924, N. C. Kelkar, Editor *Kesari* (Poona) was prosecuted on a charge of Contempt of Court. A reference had been made to the Bombay High Court by the Sessions Judge of Poona in a case against C. J. Walker on account of disagreement with the Jury who had returned a verdict of "not guilty." The Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Fawcett accepted the Jury's verdict and discharged the accused. Thereafter the *Kesari* made certain comments which were construed to have offended against law. Mr. Kelkar was fined Rs. 5,000.

(2) The same year the *Bombay Chronicle* incurred the wrath of the authorities. Mr. Painter, the plaintiff, had been Magistrate and Collector at the time of a shooting incident in which the Police had fired on a crowd killing some persons and wounding others. The *Chronicle's* comments on the action of the Magistrate were taken exception to and Painter instituted a suit claiming damages to the extent of one lakh Rupees. Mr. Justice Kemp admitted that he had no evidence before him of the circulation of the *Chronicle* but had no hesitation in assessing damages at Rs. 15,000 with costs.

(3) In Behar the *Search-Light* was similarly penalised.

(4) In Bengal a non-Indian member of the Calcutta Police Force instituted a case for defamation against the *Servant* and summons was issued against and served on the Printer and Publisher even before the process-fee had been deposited. The Government spent Rs. 12,968 in conducting the case for Kidd, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, Calcutta.

(5) In Bengal an officer of the Police Department instituted a case against the *Bangabasi* and the Government of Bengal felt no scruple to spend Rs. 80,000 of the people's money to redeem the reputation of the officer drawing a salary of a hundred rupees or so a month.

Several sedition cases were instituted against the *Forward* group of newspapers, the organs of the Swarjya Party founded by Chittaranjan Das.

Then in 1930 the Government of India again brought to life the repealed Act of 1910—not with the sanction of the Legislative Council but by promulgating an Ordinance on the plea—" It has been recognised that the anticipations formed in 1922 (*i.e.* when the Act was repealed) have not been fulfilled, but that on the contrary the tone of a certain section of the Press has been growing almost steadily worse, with the immunity from effective control."

If the tone of a certain section of the Press had been growing almost " worse " from the point of view of the Government, it was not because of immunity from effective control but because of the growing determination of the people of India to secure their birthright—independence. Indeed, the day was no longer far off when the British in India realised that repression bare and grim is soon to nothing brought when opposed to the will of an intelligent people.

The eagerness of officers of Government to give effect to the repressive policy of the Government became clear when the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal made himself the target of ridicule by issuing a notice on the keeper of the *Indian Daily News* Press to deposit a sum of Rs. 10,000 though he had no power under the law to do so and the Chief Presidency Magistrate was constrained to admit on 7th May, 1930

—" It has been brought to my notice that two orders were served in error, there should be one order for the Press; only one amount should be demanded by me."

The Press Ordinance of 1930, was followed by the Press Emergency Act of 1931. In reply to two short notice questions asked in the Legislative Assembly by Seth Gobinddas in September, 1935, Sir Henry Craik placed on the table of the House detailed statements showing the action taken against newspapers under the Ordinance and the Act. It showed that newspapers had been compelled to deposit security amounting to Rs. 2,52,851. The first statement showed that during the year 1935, action had been taken against 73 newspapers. Provincially divided the list shows :—

In Madras Presidency security was demanded from 9 papers, in Bombay Presidency from 31 papers, in Bengal from 3 papers, in the United Provinces from 3 papers, in the Punjab from 12 newspapers and in Delhi from 8 papers.

The third statement gave the names of 166 newspapers which had deposited a total of Rs. 2,50,000 in security since the promulgation of the Press Ordinance of 1930. In Bombay 55 newspapers had deposited a total security of Rs. 1,04,201. Of these the *Free Press Journal* made six deposits totalling Rs. 31,000 and the *Mahratta* of Poona, five—totalling Rs. 9,000. In Bengal the *Liberty*, the *Dainik Basumati*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Nayak*, the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and the *Visvamitra* had been called upon to deposit security.

The fourth statement gave the names of newspapers—Province by Province—whose securities had been declared forfeited since the Press Ordinance of 1930.

The fifth statement gave the names—Province by Province—of 348 newspapers that had failed to deposit

requisite securities and were, in consequence, not started or ceased publication or whose declaration became null and void since the promulgation of the Press Ordinance, 1930. The provincial penalty was as follows :—

Madras	28	newspapers
Bombay	78	,,
Bengal	26	,,
U. P.	39	,,
Punjab	127	,,
Bihar and Orissa	5	,,
Assam	3	,,
N.-W.-F. Province	9	,,
Delhi	27	,,
Ajmer-Marwara	2	,,

Then came the riotous night of repression during which it was extremely difficult for the Press to keep the lamp of nationalism trimmed and burning. Repression rose like a hydra-headed monster while nationalism was sought to be thrown overboard to make room for rank communalism. Public life became littered with the jetsam of sound opinion and the flotsam of false ideals. Every newspaper had to do its duty in fear of unjust persecution.

I would mention here only two cases with which I was intimately connected. Both were in connection with the *Dainik Basumati* of which I was then the editor. In one of these the Government of Bengal sought to penalise the paper by forfeiting security deposit and ask for fresh deposit for publishing an article about which Mr. Justice Henderson expressed the opinion that it showed that far from doing anything mischievous the editor had done what " honest journalists do every day."

In another case the publication of the paper was prohibited for three weeks.

I will here give an interesting account of another attempt to stifle the same paper. When the Ministers decided to crush the paper unless the man at the helm was removed, I spoke to the Law Member—Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar at Simla over the phone in the evening. He happened to be an old friend. He at once took up our cause and saw the Viceroy and we came to know afterwards that Lord Linlithgow, when he heard everything from his Law Member, phoned up the Bengal Governor—"You cannot stop a paper of *Basumati's* standing." Unaware of the message from the Viceroy to the Governor the mighty Ministers sat in solemn conclave the next day and decided to stop the publication of the paper. The Governor had, in the mean time. asked the Secretary to send the order of the Ministry to him before issuing it. He compromised with the decision of the Ministers by ordering that the paper should deposit as security Rs. 15,000. The High Court, when approached, ordered the security to be returned.

I mention these cases to give our successors an idea of the danger which beset the path of the journalists at the time as journalism in some Provinces had to steer clear of the Scylla of communalism and the Charybdis of bureaucratic intolerance.

In every Province the Press was the *bete noir* of the bureaucracy. Not only prancing proconsuls and blundering bureaucrats but their docile Ministers too, in many cases, hated criticism.

In some cases the Press behaved like the cammomile, the more it is trodden on the more it grows. Papers had large reserves of power that gave their opinion weight and their words the stamp of authority. The Press had a mission. It had a thought gnawing ceaselessly at the

vitals and growing by what it was feeding on. It was fitted at once to inspire, and direct.

A section of the Press had the smell of powder about its path and wherever it appeared one seemed to hear the crack of musketry and to feel the hot breath of battle. But there was another section which cultivated the temperament of compromise and conciliation which makes for peace and pleasantness but fails in the hour of crisis. The Press continuously fought with autocracy—autocracy masquerading under the plumage of bureaucracy. The two were flint and steel—meeting only to clash and strike fire. And the fight went on till independence was born again after centuries of obliteration. For the Press in India held :—

> "Though we break our father's promise,
> We have noble duties first;
> The traitor to humanity is the traitor most accursed;
> Man is more than Constitutions, better
> rot beneath the sod—
> Than be true to Church and State while
> we are doubly false to God."

Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha, himself a journalist, said in 1935 :—

"The political and economical advance that we are enjoying to-day is due, in a very large measure, to the great development in the Indian Press, which has been a very important factor in the growth and expansion of public opinion in this country. As such its existence and influence cannot be safely disregarded even by the most bureaucratic Government, and as it continues to maintain a steady improvement, so shall it gain greater influence and prestige, until backed by the solid weight of

Indian public opinion, it will become as free and powerful as the Press in the advanced countries of Europe and America.''

Much water has rolled down the Ganges since 1935. We are to-day enjoying Self-Government. But it is to newspapers more than to speakers that we must acknowledge our debt for this change. It was the *Bande Mataram*, for instance, which exhorted the people to stand against the brief magical abracadabra of despotism which turned an action perfectly legitimate into a crime or misdemeanour punishable in property and person and to hold that in our relations with the foreigner—'' to be content with the relations of master and dependent or superior and subordinate, would be a mean and pitiful aspiration unworthy of manhood ; to strive for anything less than a strong and glorious freedom would be to insult the greatness of our past, and the magnificent possibilities of our future.''

The teaching of the nationalist Press in India acted like the touch of the magic-wand. The history of the country in 1905, and the subsequent years shows how gone were the soothing dope, the prattle of citizenship, the cloying treacle of promises with which the British had deluged the nation for a long time and swift was the reversion to things elemental, beyond speech, beyond imagination. The nation was in courage flaming : in resolve at white-heat : and above all, in revolt against false and sentimental advisers. The nationalist section of the Indian Press did not hesitate to declare :—

(1) '' The answer of violence to violence is justified and inevitable.''

(2) '' Politics is the ideal of the Kshatriya, and the morality of the Kshatriya ought to govern our political actions.''

No wonder the Indian newspapers accomplished the change in our policy from prayer and petition to demand and action.

The battle which the Indian Press fought with the foreigner is almost over and has resulted in victory for the Press. I purposely use the qualifying word "almost." For though the need for a free and unfettered Press in India is perhaps more urgent than ever it has been before, it does not enjoy that full measure of freedom which it demands and deserves. The British have left a legacy of laws enacted to cripple the liberty of the Press in a conquered country. It is a pity they have also left in some of our men and women who dabble in politics that slave mentality which stands in the way of their removing those restrictive laws from the statute book. We would tell them, in the language of Moore :—

> "Thou hast yet,
> Some lessons to learn, some frailties to forget."

They will hardly be able to discharge their duties if British-made laws are considered by them sacrosanct; if history written by the British is accepted by them as true; if the idea of British superiority remains unchanged in them; if foreign intoxicants cheer them; if British back-door influence poisons the fountains of their policy.

"The stupendous Fourth State" as Carlyle said of the Press, "whose wide world-embracing influence what eye can take in?"

The politician should try to profit by the teaching of the Press or he will share the fate of Humpty-dumpty of the nursery rhyme who sat on a wall and when he had a great fall—

"All the King's horses and all the King's men
Could not place Humpty-dumpty on the wall again."

James Montgomery has said :—

"'The Press! What is the Press?'—I cried;
When thus a wonderous voice replied:
'In me all human knowledge dwells;
The oracle of oracles,
Past, present, future, I reveal,
Or in oblivion's silence seal,
What I preserve can perish never,
What I forego is lost for ever."

V

The British Government in India had always been suspicious of the Press—especially of the Nationalist Press. In the beginning they had even deported English journalists who had dared criticise the officials and their policy. Then when the Nationalist Press made itself active, officialdom scented danger and tried to attack them like sleuth-hounds. Officialdom only encouraged docile and unpretending journalists who supported them. This policy they had inherited from Tarquinius Superbus; and—as Sir William Harcourt said in the British Parliament, when " moving for papers " for a debate on the Manipur tragedy of 1891—" Although in these days they did not cut off the heads of the tall poppies, they took other............means of removing any person of dangerous political pre-eminence to a harmless condition." No wonder they persecuted and prosecuted—

(1) Upadhaya Brahmabandhaba the editor of the *Sandhaya* who stated in the Court—

" I accept the entire responsibility of the publication, management and conduct of the newspaper *Sandhaya*............But I do not want to take any part in the trial because I do not believe that in carrying out my humble share of the God-appointed mission of Swaraj, I am in any way accountable to the alien people who happen to rule over us and whose interest is and must necessarily be in the way of our true national interest."

The European Magistrate felt as though he had been hit across the face with a whip and cried " Oh ! Oh !"

(2) Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the editor of the *Keshari* who was sentenced to three years' transportation on each of two charges—*i.e.*, six years' transportation and a fine of Rs. 1,000 the Judge adding insult to the injury by referring to his age and "the interest of the country which you profess to love." Tilak said to the Court :—

" There are higher powers which rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."

(3) Aurobindo Ghose of the *Bande Mataram*, who unhesitatingly advocated the ideal of " India free, one and indivisible " and said—" To strive for anything less than a strong and glorious freedom would be to insult the greatness of our past and the magnificent possibilities of our future."

(4) Ramananda Chatterjee, the editor of the *Prabashi* and the *Modern Review*, whose passion was the passion of the patriot.

I need not give a long list of journalists and others connected with the Press who had to suffer sacrifices for their work. And it would not be superfluous to mention that in 1942, not only the Editor of the *Bharat* and of the *Harijan* (Bengalee) were imprisoned but also clerks and compositors in any way connected with the papers.

Demands for Security Deposit, ban on the publication of the papers, pre-censorship orders, fines, preventive arrests and detention without trial were some of the measures adopted by the British bureaucracy to gag the Press.

But there was yet another means which the British bureaucracy adopted—for there was no depth of degradation to which they could not descend—the attempt to subsidise, *i.e.*, bribe the Press. They had also tried to

belittle the importance of the Nationalist Press by saying that the papers were conducted for pecuniary gain by men whose mental equipments were not praise-worthy. When this was said by Sir Harvey Adamson the reply given in the *Bande Mataram* was what our modern tin-gods would do well to remember. The calumniator was asked to see for himself how the Nationalist newspapers were run at a sacrifice to serve the cause of freedom and were conducted by men " a corner of whose brain contains a richer store than your whole Scotch skull." The man who gave this reply was Aurobindo Ghose destined to be recognised as one of the greatest thinkers and seers of the age.

It is a fact that :—

" An open foe may prove a curse,
But a pretended friend is worse."

The attempt to subsidise the Press in the hope that where intimidation may fail, temptation may succeed was discovered in Bengal because, perhaps, it was in Bengal that nationalism had manifested itself most powerfully.

In the Government's " secret " report—' Propaganda ' (1932-35) the Press Officer wrote as follows :—

" The intense pressure on the Nationalist Press bore fruit towards the end of 1933, when some of the most important papers came forward, though half-heartedly, to give publicity to the materials supplied by me from time to time explaining the motives, policy and activities of Government. By the beginning of 1934, I had succeeded through personal influence, a judicious control of official advertisements, and the threat of the Press Act in the background in persuading one or two of the most important Nationalist papers to accept even ' editorial ' articles from me secretly. The articles were written in

consonance with the general policy of the papers to convey in a subtle manner the Government point of view or the view more favourable to Government............

" It may be stated that editorial articles were supplied to Nationalist papers not only to create public opinion against terrorism but also to explain to the people important beneficent activities of Government."

The Press Officer gloated over his achievement and said :—

" The revolutionary character of this method of work must be apparent. This was probably the first time since the days of Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty that the Nationalist Press allowed itself to be used by Government on this scale and in this manner."

It was thus insinuated that during Lord Lytton's Viceroyalty the Nationalist Press in Bengal had stooped low. But we know how the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* converted itself into an English weekly to avoid being attacked while the *Somaprakas* stopped publication as a protest against the Vernacular Press Act. The insinuation was unfounded.

It was revealed in the Report of the Press Officer :—

(1) " Apart from the work through the Nationalist Press detailed above, help was given to start and carry on a student's journal which sought to promote healthy political ideas through offer of rewards on an extensive scale for the solution of picture puzzles and through sober and balanced articles written by scholars and leaders of public opinion. I myself regularly contributed to this Journal."

(2) " Another (?) weekly political journal is being assisted by us, though not in the same way. Over 800 copies are being distributed at our expense to schools, colleges, Bar Libraries and local leaders of public opinion

who are likely to make use of them for propaganda against subversive movements; the editorial articles in this journal are being supplied by me every week."

It may not be out of place to mention here that the Student's Journal and the weekly paper were both started and conducted by non-Bengalees—the first being the *Modern Student* (of K. P. Thomas) and the second *Whip* (of R. S. Sarma).

"In accordance with instructions issued by us," wrote the Press Officer, "local newspapers have been organised by the District Magistrates of Faridpore, Jessore, Rangpur, Bogra, Dinajpur, Birbhum, Khulna and Maldah and they have been provided with funds to purchase copies of the papers for free distribution."

That the Government was the victim of a guilty conscience would be evident from the following, taken from the Report:—

"Secret Service Funds for the Press Officer and District Officers:—The allotment of funds to the Press Office: for Press propaganda was increased in 1934 to meet the demands of his increased activities. As it was found desirable not to disclose in audit the details of expenditure incurred in this connection, Government, in consultation with the Accountant-General, sanctioned a procedure under which the Press Officer was authorised to draw bills without submitting the vouchers to the Accountant-General. The same procedure was extended in course of the year to similar expenditure by District Officers."

These ugly facts were brought to light by Sarat Chandra Bose. He sounded a tocsin of alarm in the Provincial Legislative Assembly in course of a debate when he remarked:—

" I would say to the House that a subsidized Press means a muzzled Press ; a subsidized Press means a Press speaking with its tongue in its cheek ; a subsidized Press means a Press which is willing to lend itself to prostitution."

In this connection he also read out extracts from two letters which had passed between two shining lights of the Anglo-Indian community in 1933 to show that the evil had been one of long standing and likely to assume the alarming proportion of a chronic malady—which he sought to cure.

Then it was in December, 1936 that the stage was set for the elections under the new Constitution. " Such a moment " said Sarat Chandra Bose at a public meeting held on 1st September, 1938, at the University Institute, Calcutta, " called for a special effort to rouse popular enthusiasm for the Congress, to strengthen its hold on the people, to remove misconceptions and the possibility of misunderstanding and I read out at two successive meetings some of the extracts from the Press Officer's report with the object of putting the public on guard against insincerity in certain sections of the Nationalist Press."

This created a flutter in some dove-cotes—rather this was a signal for an attack on the speaker who gave further details at the public meeting and said that it would be fatal to subsidize the Press :—

" I have already pointed out to you the inherent contradiction between democracy and the subsidization of the Press. And I would repeat that nothing is more essential for the existence and working of the democratic form of government than that the right of the Press and of the public to express opinion freely should remain unimpaired. This freedom is bound to be curtailed by subsidization of the Press."

He added :—

"Although I am well aware that there are still newspaper proprietors and editors in Bengal who would spurn such offers with contempt, not all men are equally firm in their integrity and strength of purpose, not all men can rise above personal considerations. There is every reason, consequently, to apprehend that subsidization of the Press will encourage cowardice and hypocrisy, and favour self-seekers."

It is not necessary to pursue the matter which may be allowed to disappear into the limbo of oblivion. Suffice it to say that public indignation reached white-heat and the editor of a well-known newspaper considered it necessary to escape unpopularity by tendering an unqualified apology which he had to publish in his own paper.

Let us hope, though temptations have multiplied, we have journalists who have not lost, even temporarily, the spark of the divine, that they do not drop a principle as lightly as the mariner drops ballast from the hold, journalists who hate compromise, petty surrenders here, suppression of truth there, equivocations, legerdemain.

If the necessity to be on our guard against temptations was so great when the foreigner was our administrator, surely the necessity has been augmented by our being under what we are tempted to say, euphemistically, a National government.

It is, therefore, that I have found with anxiety, akin to alarm, the Chief Minister of West Bengal declare that he was seriously thinking of subsidizing the Press. He seems to me to contradict those who have created noble traditions for the Press and who would tell him what Charles Reade said to one who had contradicted him :—

" Sir, you have ventured to contradict me on a question with regard to which I am profoundly learned, where you are ignorant as dirt."

This gentleman's remarks could have been allowed their own monumental place in the desert of silly and hysterical judgments had he not been speaking from a ridiculous eminence.

He said that " a great deal had been heard and told about freedom of the Press. But he had for some time been dealing with some aspects of newspaper publications and he found that something sometimes had been published without realising the effect of that particular publication, possibly to create more enthusiasm among the people so that the paper would sell better."

Here the speaker was certainly better than Sir Fretful Plagiary in Sheridan's—*The Critic*—who exclaimed :—

" The newspapers ! Sir, they are the most villainous —licentious—abominable—infernal—Not that I ever read them—no—I make it a rule never to look into a newspaper."

For, he said that he had been dealing with some aspects of newspaper publications for some time, though like the one-eyed doe in Æsop's Fables he had seen the Press against the background of the State against which the charge has been levelled that it cannot prevent corruption and injustice that breed in the warm comfort of inefficiency from thriving and multiplying. And, perhaps, he has seen only those journalists whose ear is always to the ground to catch the direction of the march of the million-footed and who would go forth to the conflict with their big drums and breezy war cries, sure of big battalions—men who direct their course not by fixed stars but by weather vane—men who believe with Mr. Bigelow that

" A merciful Providence fashioned us hollow,
In order that we might our princerples swallow."

Then the State Minister unblushingly declared—

"I think in the interest of the country as a whole—and here I am considering the question of journals in the background of the State interest, it may be necessary to subsidize certain journals which will try to find out the truth and veracity of a particular news and shall devote some time and energy to the writing of the columns."

It is not a quack's remedy that is here sought to be prescribed; but it is an attempt to—" send the drain unto the fountain, lest the stream should issue pure." It is not a case of some people rushing in "where angels fear to tread;" but one of deliberate attempt to debauch the Press.

A subsidized Press is a servile Press and as such cannot discharge its functions properly. Every journalist who has regard for the responsibility of his profession must resent the idea of being subsidized. What are the traditions of journalism?

We are well aware of the treatment of the Press by the British Government in India. Even in 1943 when a severe famine was taking its toll in India the foreign correspondents in India were not permitted to cable abroad even the bare facts of deaths and hospital admissions due to starvation, issued daily in Calcutta by the Director of Information to the Bengal Government, lest the British and American public would know the blunt facts of the situation. It reminds one of the Biblical expression—"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon." And yet the foreign Government in India said " my anchor holds " for they said that what they did was done in the interest of the State! Ministries may come and they may go but the Press must go on for

ever. The Press is more alive to the real interest of the State than the Ministers who only take part in passing shows—who have their day and cease to be. Journalists need not learn their duties and responsibilities from blundering bureaucrats or megalomaniac ministers who may make the field ring with their importunate chink for a time though they are no other than insects of the hour.

Then it was said that the State Minister felt that editors, journalists, Government, public educators, medical men should work together in order that the country may develop. We wonder why engineers who must play an important part in that development as also scientists were left out as not aristocratic enough to be mentioned. This, we were told, can only happen if there was co-ordination of ideals. "For this purpose there should be exchange of ideas between editors and those responsible for seeing that the editors did not go beyond the limits of law and finding out in what way to influence the Press." Who are these watch-dogs maintained by the Government to see that the editors did not transgress the bounds of law? What are their legal qualifications and their journalistic experience? The cat comes out of the bag when it is said that the real intention is to influence the Press.

The next step has been to suggest that one or two servants of the Government—vested with the duty of watching the activities of the Press—should be teaching the students!

Disraeli had objected on principle to the interference of the State in matters of education. It was, he said, a return to "the system of barbarous age, the system of paternal government; wherever was found what was called a paternal government was found a State education. It has been discovered that the best way to secure

implicit obedience was to commence tyranny in the nursery."

Are we ready to go back to the barbarous age and accept the condition which was once thus described by Maurice in the House of Commons—

"The State rushes in and says we will make you members of our family whether you like it or not. You shall love by Act of Parliament and embrace by Order of Council."

In England Lord Granville in a letter to Delane, of *The Times*, wrote in 1867 :—

"I wish you and Gladstone had more personal communication. It would be of immense advantage to him, and for the direction of such an important organ of public opinion as *The Times* it cannot be otherwise than an advantage to know the mind of one who in every position is sure to exercise so great an influence on public affairs."

But Delane did not entertain the idea and was well aware that intimacy with "powers that be" in politics may stand in the way of criticising their action when necessary. When Disraeli begged to be allowed to nominate his own reviewer for the 'Life of Lord George Bentinck' Delane wrote such a letter in reply as caused Disraeli to apologise promptly for his "stupid suggestion." We have seen how in reply to a letter written by Sir Michael O'Dwyer that *The Times* had done him an injury by its comments on the Punjab "disorders," the paper pointed out how the prancing proconsul had made some unfounded assertions and concluded its remarks with the following words—"While we are ready to make allowances for his obvious perturbation, we would remind him that *The Times* suffers no dictation from any official quarter in regard to the discharge of its public duty."

Any attempt to push the thin end of the wedge with a view at once to impair the autonomy of the University and the freedom of the Press must be regarded with suspicion and hatred.

The Press has fought for its rights and will be ready to fight for them against tremendous odds.

The National Government in India, conducted by men who have been trained in the traditions of bureaucracy, and cannot get free from the demoralising prejudices incident to their position should understand that the nation is in no mood to let injustice go unpunished. The plea of "infant State," adduced by men in dotage cannot be accepted by the people—a mighty people re-awakening after a great downfall—a people who had not been satisfied with an inoffensive philanthropic patriotism but had created a condition in which one could say :—

> "Sublime events are rushing to their birth.
> Lo! tyrants by their victims are withstood,
> And freedom's seed still grows, though steeped in blood."

What were our special dissatisfactions during British domination? According to Aurobindo :—

(1) "We are dissatisfied with the fiscal and economic conditions of British rule in India, with the foreign exploitation of the country, the continual bleeding of its resources, the chronic famine and rapid impoverishment which result. . . . . ."

(2) "We are dissatisfied with the conditions under which education is imparted in this country, its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its subordination to the Government. . . . . ."

(3) "We are dissatisfied with the administration of justice, the ruinous costliness of the civil side, the

brutal rigour of its criminal penalties and procedure, ... its frequent subordination to political objects.''

(4) '' We disapprove of the executive administration, its arbitrariness, its meddling and inquisitorial character, its thoroughness of repression, its misuse of police for the repression instead of the protection of the people.''

Let us consider these items one by one. The fiscal and economic conditions have not changed out of recognition. The vampire of capitalism is thriving—the change from the white to the brown or black is of no significance. Foreign exploitation sits on the country like an incubus. The chronic famine has become even more acute and the impoverishment more rapid.

The system of education evolved and adopted by the British for their own benefit has not been discarded, and our students are being forced up upon a foreign system without discipline, without contentment and without a God. Learning is not connected with the living forces of society and cannot make even industrial India a sharer in the classic traditions of the lettered world—not to speak of being the inheritor of the culture of our forefathers.

The administration of justice is in strict accordance with the system adopted by the British. The ruinous costliness of the civil side and the brutal rigour of the criminal penalties and procedure continue as before. The laws are those made by the foreigner and the procedure the same.

The arbitrariness of the executive administration, its inquisitorial character, its roughness of repression—all—all are there.

Add to these the inefficiency of amateur administrators and officers and the corruption that is eating

into the core of the administration while greed and nepotism are spreading their fungus growth over it, and you will find the condition of the masses who are an ill-used race of men—" the emptiness of ages on their face."

Even urgent changes have not been accomplished.

Only newspapers can—if they do their duty—cure the canker of misrule. The revelations that have been made are astounding, and such as would make the authorities quit office in any truly democratic country. Men who have no idea of duties and responsibilities naturally feel exasperated when compelled to confront the gaze of the public with all their lies and iniquities in their hands. Even those among them who have scant respect for the sanctity of domestic life assume the attitude of injured innocence and abuse newspapers for producing documentary evidence of their lapses and talk of degradation in public life! On one occasion we heard it said by one in power—" it is one of the games of public newspapers (as if there are private newspapers!) to-day to try and find out from public offices some documents and to make a scoop."

This will remind many of what Bright wrote to Garth who had attacked him—" You wished to get into Parliament, and were not particular as to the path which might lead to it. You threw dirt during your canvass, doubtless knowing that if needful you could eat it afterwards. There are many men who go through dirt to dignities, and I suspect you have no objection to be one of them."

It is the obvious duty of newspapers to expose iniquities and to those who condemn that discharge of duty they say what Palmerston said to one who had taken exception to his work—" I feel it right to inform the Hon. Gentleman that any opinion he may entertain

of me is to me a matter of perfect indifference and contempt."

Public life is polluted with the pestilential breath of men who abuse their power for personal gain or the gain of those who are their henchmen, of men who prostitute their powers, of men who should not be touched with a pair of tongs; and it is kept sweet and pure by the care and vigilance of newspapers.

According to Wendell Phillips "what gun-powder did for war, the Press has done for the mind."

Napoleon, once the map-maker of Europe, said of the journalist :—

"A journalist is a grumbler, a censurer, a giver of advice, a regent of sovereign, a tutor of nations. Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."

An attempt to break the Press by repression would be foolish, and one to blunt it by temptation would be mean. The British Government in India had done many foolish things in their attempt to curb the Press. One instance should suffice. *The Statesman*, published Lord Curzon's half-humourous, half-angry Note of May, 1902 in which he had recorded his opinion about the decision of his Secretaries on the proposal to transfer Orissa from Bengal to the Central Provinces or forming Orissa into a separate Chief Commissionership in course of which he said :—

"Now, at the close, I am invited to give my assent to a document which, without the smallest previous reference to me, or attempt to ascertain my opinion, assumes my assent to the propositions which have been excogitated by the Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries in their fourteen months of travail and commits me to the definite statements that 'there is no great reason why Sambalpur should be incorporated in Orissa' and that

'the objections to the removal of Orissa from Bengal appear to be equally cogent'."

And the Government of India attempted to punish *The Statesman* by withholding from it the courtesy of the usual supply of official notifications. This action on the part of the Government was commented on by "Max" of Capital thus :—

"I was reminded of the story how an irate subscriber, named Jonathan Fizzley, offended at something which had appeared in *The New York Tribune*, stepped into the editorial sanctum and roared out, 'Sir, I have stopped your paper.' Old Horace Greeley quietly looked up and said, 'Wa'al stranger, that looks rather serious. Let's go and see.' He went upstairs and opened the door of the compositors' department, 'All right there anyhow.' He beckoned the stranger to look into other departments, but by the time they came to where the Hoe machines were in full operation Jonathan Fizzley turned and fled. Mr. Fizzley did not stop *The New York Tribune*. Mr. Risley is powerless to injure *The Statesman*."

The British Government in India had done foolish things ; and the national Government of India would be only manifesting a masterpiece of melancholy meanness if they attempt to injure newspapers which know their duty and responsibility and suffer no dictation from any quarter in the discharge of their journalistic duties.

That Ministers of the National Government may indulge in corybantics which even British bureaucrats felt ashamed to exhibit we have unfortunately seen. When the Hallet Circular (1935 A.D.) was hurled at the face of the British bureaucracy the bureaucrats felt ashamed and did not turn round and say that the publication in the newspapers of "confidential" documents was one of the greatest tragedies of public life,

and thus supply materials for a farce. And we can assure megalomaniac Ministers who think of suppressing newspaper comments or prescribing for them subsidies which are only quacks' remedies that they only cover themselves with ridicule and become the target of scorn. The liberty of the Press is more precious to a nation than a troupe of Ministers whom a man in New Delhi with a brilliant idea once represented by a procession of donkeys.

"Drest in a little brief authority" and intoxicated with power men may play such frantic parts "as make the angels weep" but their endeavours to injure the Press for good must always be doomed to disaster. And the names of such men will only be remembered as those of petty tyrants who ride for a fall and who deserve nothing but contempt.

Newspapers, on the other hand, have their duties to discharge as sentinels of the liberties of the public. They must abhor that attitude which "in nations grown corrupt" "love bondage more than liberty—bondage with ease than strenuous liberty." A newspaper which fawns on those in temporary power for favour, which would kow-tow before autocrats or pseudo-democrats who assail liberty, civil or otherwise, who would place personal gain above national interest, which would consider its own interests above the needs of the nation—as unfortunately was shamelessly done in West Bengal during the election of Sarat Chandra Bose from South Calcutta when some nationalist newspapers considered no means too mean to serve the Congress—such newspapers cannot claim that respect on which alone can they stand four square to all the winds that blow. Newspapers must be prepared to take the risks of their omission and suffer sacrifices whenever necessary. And they must develop personality, that mysterious complex of qualities whose

citadel is never stormed by industry alone, and without whose gates brilliancy so often clamours in vain. Newspapers should regard every attempt to assail liberty as an act of sacrilege and every enemy of liberty an enemy who attempts the "Future's portal with the Past's blood rusted key." They must remember that :

"The traitor to Humanity is the traitor most accursed."

12—1793 B.